THE ECOLOGICAL TEMPORALITIES OF THINGS IN JAMES JOYCE’S ULYSSES AND
VIRGINIA WOOLF’S TO THE LIGHTHOUSE AND BETWEEN THE ACTS

A thesis submitted
to Kent State University in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts

by

Leanna J. Lostoski

May 2016

© Copyright
All rights reserved
Except for previously published materials
Thesis written by

Leanna J. Lostoski

B.A., Kent State University, 2013
M.A., Kent State University, 2016

Approved by

Ryan Hediger, Ph.D. , Advisor
Robert Trogdon, Ph.D. , Chair, Department of English
James L. Blank, Ph.D. , Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
### TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTERS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Introduction: The Ecological Temporalities of Things</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. The Temporality of Things in the “Wandering Rocks” Episode of Ulysses</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. “Imaginations of the Strangest Kind”: The Materiality of Deep Time in <em>To the Lighthouse</em> and <em>Between the Acts</em></td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>To the Lighthouse</em></td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Between the Acts</em></td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woolf’s “Imaginations of the Strangest Kind”</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION: EXPLODED-VIEWS IN THE AGE OF THE ANTHROPOCENE</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORKS CITED</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the guidance and support of my thesis advisor, Ryan Hediger. I enrolled in his Ecocriticism course in the spring of 2015 without any clue as to what ecocriticism even meant, or any clue that his class would define the future of my scholarship. Through his engaging instruction and provocative assigned readings, I became fascinated with the discourse and wanted to continue working with ecocriticism even after the course had ended. At the beginning of this project, I was anxious and unsure of how my ideas would somehow coalesce into the 82-page document before you. Ryan’s patience and understanding carried me through this project, and his constructive comments on my drafts consistently challenged me to push my arguments even further than I thought I could. I cannot thank him enough for helping me develop my grasps at ideas about the material, temporality, and modernism into fully developed arguments that I hope to continue to expand upon for the rest of my scholarly career.

I would like to sincerely thank my committee members, Kevin Floyd and Tammy Clewell, not only for agreeing to be a part of this project, but for planting the seeds of it as well through their pivotal instruction during my undergraduate degree at Kent State University. I first learned about theories of temporality that play such a crucial role in this thesis in Kevin’s provocative and challenging Literary Criticism course, and Tammy’s dynamic and insightful instruction on twentieth-century British literature first sparked my love of modernist texts, especially Virginia Woolf. The English Department at Kent State University as a whole deserves my thanks for all of its supportive faculty and staff. I am grateful in particular to Claire Culleton, who agreed to do an individual investigation of James Joyce with me. I certainly would not have
comprehended as much of *Ulysses* as I do (or at least think I do) without her understanding of the text and her patience with my confusion.

I am hugely grateful to everyone at my graduate assistantship at the Research and Evaluation Bureau for supporting and encouraging me throughout this project. Working for such kind, loving, and understanding people like Debbie Shama-Davis and Pam Freeman has made this project immensely less stressful. I sincerely appreciate Debbie and Pam’s flexibility in allowing me to take time off of work to drive down to the Tuscarawas campus to meet with Ryan or to cram in a full day of writing. And I would like to thank another resident of White Hall, Erica Eckert, who continued to take an interest in me and my thesis and always encouraged me to follow my ambitions and dreams.

The support of my family has been immeasurable. I am beyond grateful for my parents, who believed in me from the beginning and offer endless comfort and love. Also, they let me live at home and fed me throughout this thesis, for which I am eternally indebted to them. I always knew I would get a master’s degree because when I was little, I wanted to be just like my master’s-degree-holding parents. I still do want to be just like them, and thanks to their support and encouragement, I am finally able to realize this dream of holding my own master’s degree. A heartfelt thanks goes out to my younger brothers, Joey and Jack, and my grandparents, who bought me enough gift cards to Tree City and Scribbles to fuel me with caffeine throughout this project. A special thanks to my Austrian brother, David Petutschnig, as well for his support all the way from Europe. I am thankful for how the feline members of my family, Petey and Jasper, always managed to cheer me up with their purrs and head-butts. And to my Nonna I am especially grateful, as she always knew that I was meant to be a scholar and has supported my creative and academic endeavors all along.
Thank you to my dear friends, Stephanie Halasz, Andrea Whaley, and Shelby Cowles, for making me laugh and listening to my struggles throughout the writing of this thesis. I am grateful for Danielle Hart’s company as we both worked for endless hours together on our theses in the various coffee shops around Kent. A special thanks to Rebekah Taylor, who kindly and cheerfully responded to numerous texts about formatting questions and served as another thoughtful and non-anthropocentric sounding-board for my new materialist ideas. My friends and coaches at SPC Strength and Conditioning have taken care of my physical health by working out with me first thing in the mornings as well as my mental health by encouraging and supporting me throughout this thesis, for which they deserve my thanks. Finally, I would like to thank Patrick Ho for believing in me even when I did not believe in myself and for being my constant throughout this journey all the way in New Hampshire.
Chapter I

Introduction: The Ecological Temporalities of Things

Time and materiality: these two domains are inextricably woven into our existence as human beings, and yet we often go about our days without truly acknowledging the presence of either of them. These two forces were also called into question as the turn of the twentieth century swiftly accelerated humanity out of the Victorian era and into a more globalized and modernized world. Modernist authors joined other artists and thinkers who engaged in questioning the material and time through experimenting with representing this entirely new and modern life in their works. Authors like James Joyce and Virginia Woolf recognized the need to experiment with the traditional form of the novel to more accurately depict life in the modern world. Their visions of modern life were rendered in full as they described with striking detail, complexity, and accuracy not only their human characters, but also nonhuman materialities that appear in their works. These nonhuman materialities—like discarded flyers floating down a river, tortoise-shell butterflies, a twig caught on a skirt, swallows, shadows, a coin flying through the air, ocean winds, and a lily pond to name a few—present in the works of Joyce and Woolf are remarkable because they have as much influence over the narratives as the human characters.

Yet, these materialities have not been sufficiently studied by critics and readers. We know from our own experiences that it is impossible to separate the nonhuman from our everyday lives, but we too often exclude the material from our critical thought or dismiss it as simply metaphorical in our search for meaning. This thesis argues that we must take the material more seriously as it presents itself in literary texts, particularly in texts that also question a
singular and homogenous experience of the passage of time. Drawing from the work of new materialist scholars, I investigate how *Ulysses*, *To the Lighthouse*, and *Between the Acts* all represent the nonhuman and the material in the modern world as much as they portray the human, as well as how the nonhuman and the human experience a multiplicity of temporalities. These novels present a complete picture of what life was truly like at the turn of the twentieth century—a complete picture being one that includes both the human and the nonhuman.

In my analysis of materiality in *Ulysses*, I focus on Episode 10 titled “Wandering Rocks.” Joyce divides the episode into nineteen sections—which intersect each other spatially as well as temporally—over the span of about an hour in Dublin. He devotes considerable attention to various nonhuman objects and things throughout the nineteen sections of “Wandering Rocks” in addition to chronicling the movements of his human characters. Woolf’s depiction of materiality in *To the Lighthouse* is most powerfully portrayed in the middle section of her novel titled “Time Passes.” Here, Woolf describes how the materialities that remain and come to occupy the abandoned Ramsay summer home on the Isle of Skye exist and endure for ten years in the absence of humans. Her experiment in rendering a human space without humans is unprecedented and shocking, but in “Time Passes” she succeeds in refocusing the narrative to depict the passage of time as experienced by nonhuman materialities. In Woolf’s final novel, *Between the Acts*, she furthers her vision of materiality through her own rewriting of not only English history, but also of her inclusion of geological histories of the land surrounding Pointz Hall, the setting of the novel. She additionally draws attention to the richness and materiality of the moment in depicting how the nonhuman plays as much of a role in Miss La Trobe’s pageant as her human actors. Through examining and comparing these works, I demonstrate that there is
a common factor underlying Joyce’s and Woolf’s depiction of materiality: a heightened attention to the passage of time.

Time is something we take for granted in the twenty-first century, as a display of global standardized time is ubiquitous in the digital world. It unalterably—perhaps even infallibly—ticks away in silence in the upper corners of all of our electronic devices, not even skipping a beat when we pass into a different time zone or Daylight Savings Time begins and ends. Yet, standardized time was not nearly as uniform in its transmission around the globe in the early twentieth century as it is today. Stephen Kern details the events and circumstances surrounding how time became standardized in 1884 in his book *The Culture of Time and Space 1880–1910*. According to Kern, creating a global standardized time was not such a straight-forward process. He explains that the establishment of Greenwich, England as the prime meridian as well as the subsequent standardization of time into modern time zones in 1884 created a tension between what he considers “private” and “public” time, or time as experienced by an individual and standardized time (34).

Adam Barrows explains that a standardized system of time became necessary as technological and communications advancements continued to develop toward the end of the nineteenth century. The standardization of time was largely prompted by the expansion of the railroad industry in both the US and the British Empire (264). Additionally, Kern notes that the telegraph was a communications advancement that necessitated the standardization of time by connecting communities and people across greater distances faster than ever before. Standardized timetables also became critical for synchronized military advancements and strikes that were first implemented during World War I (11–12). These technological advancements are inherently material, while time is generally considered to be an abstract force. Yet, these
technologies undeniably altered human conceptions of time as they rapidly decreased the amount of time it took to communicate and travel through space.

Kern explains that in 1884, twenty-five countries sent representatives to the Prime Meridian Conference in Washington, D.C. At this monumental conference, the prime meridian was established as Greenwich, England, the standard length of a day was determined, the world was divided into twenty-four time zones, and the beginning of the universal day was established with the creation of the International Date Line (12). To further the advancement of standardized time, the International Conference on Time was held in Paris, France in 1912 in order to determine how standardized time would be most accurately transmitted across the globe (13). The wireless telegraph made global transmission of time possible, and it was used at 10:00 a.m. on July 1, 1913 to transmit standardized time around the world for the first time. Kern argues that with this transmission, private time began to break down as standardized time began to supersede the local times of individual communities (14).

The creation of time zones in relation to Greenwich, England, according to Barrows, created “a global grid whereby every spatial point on the map could be temporally fixed in relation to England” (262). The Greenwich Royal Observatory then became “an international symbol of British imperial power” with its ability to determine the standardized and universal time used around the globe (262). The British Empire’s capability to set the standard for standardized time itself is inherently due to the materiality of the British Empire. In a sense, the British asserted their dominance not only over space with the expansiveness of land conquered by their empire and the prowess of their Navy over seas, but also over time itself as the country through which the Prime Meridian was chosen to run. It is due to the sheer amount of geographical space conquered by the British Empire that its dominance could expand beyond the
material realm of space into that of time as well. Barrows further notes that the period of time over which Greenwich Mean Time was adopted by nations one-by-one across the globe coincided with the period of time in literary history designated as high modernism. Barrows writes, “Time, which has always been a concern of the modernists, was thus intrinsically politicized in this period, bound up as it was with the problematics of imperial control and global conceptualization” (263). Joyce in particular incorporates this question of imperial control of time in *Ulysses* by depicting a Dublin that has not yet completely adopted Greenwich Mean Time and is still subversively following Dunsink time, the local time of Dublin that runs twenty-five minutes slower than Greenwich Mean Time (270). The tensions created by global standardized time, especially due to the involvement of the British Empire in its implementation, did not go unnoticed by Joyce and Woolf as they were writing during this transitional period.

There were vocal opponents to standardized time, but it was largely accepted and implemented in the modern age, according to Kern, because of its potential to simplify modern life with the increased efficiency of technological advancements like the telegraph and the railroad system (15). This improvement of daily life in the twentieth century that was so appealing to many living during that period is again fueled by the material, as technological advancements seemed to necessitate the creation of a global standardized time. However, Kern explains that the movement to standardize time was challenged by “novelists, psychologists, physicists, and sociologists who examined the way individuals create as many different times as there are life styles, reference systems, and social forms” (15). These artists and intellectuals recognized that there was a difference between an individual’s “private” experience of time and the standardized “public” experience of time. They were also unwilling to relinquish the legitimacy of private experiences of time in favor of the standardized public time of
modernization. However, technologies like trains, clocks, and telegrams continued to interrupt private experiences of time in their adherence to public standardized time, and it became increasingly difficult to live in the modern era in a temporality that deviated from standardized time. Kern concludes that the works of artists and thinkers in the early twentieth century, including modernist writers, sought to legitimize “the reality of private time against that of a single public time and to define its nature as heterogeneous, fluid, and reversible” (34).

Despite all of its practical benefits, it took over forty years for all nations to officially implement and follow global standardized time (Barrows 263, Kern 12). Standardized time ultimately imposed a single structure of temporality that rendered local and personal conceptions of time officially obsolete. It also implied that there was only one human experience of time while disregarding how the passage of time may be experienced by nonhuman materialities.

However, Albert Einstein’s theories of relativity that he developed in the early twentieth century proposed an understanding of time that is quite contrary to standardized time. Kern notes that Einstein developed his special theory of relativity in 1905, which proposes that an object moving away from a stationary object at a constant velocity will appear to the stationary object to be slowing down. His general theory of relativity of 1916 expanded his previous theory to include his ideas of how accelerated objects experience individual changes in time.

In his general theory of relativity, Einstein argued that every object in the universe has its own gravitational force. Since gravitational force is a form of acceleration, Einstein concluded that “every reference body has its own particular time” (Einstein qtd. in Kern 19). According to Einstein, every gravitational field in the universe could potentially have its own unique as well as accurate experience of time (19). Timothy Morton in *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* also comments on Einstein, and he explains that Einstein’s theory of
relativity stipulates that “time ripples along the surface of things, causing them to bend. . . . This relativity is hardwired into things themselves. Objects entangle one another in a crisscrossing mesh of spacetime fluctuations” (65). Einstein’s conclusion, which was ironically reached during the same period of time that standardized time was increasingly implemented across the globe, completely refutes the notion that there is a singular experience of temporality. Einstein’s theories of relativity not only reject a singular and uniform temporality that is experienced the same way by all materialities in the universe, but they also acknowledge that time is experienced differently by all materialities, whether they are human or nonhuman.

Given these historical trends, it is not a coincidence that Joyce and Woolf both wrote novels in the first half of the twentieth century that are deeply concerned with the passage of time. Joyce’s Ulysses and Woolf’s To the Lighthouse and Between the Acts can be viewed as responses to the standardization of time in their attempts to render a multiplicity of temporalities rather than simply linear, standardized time in these novels. Kern also notes that the “temporal reversals” of modernist novels contributed to dismantling the notion that private and public time flow at the same pace alongside each other in a forward and linear succession (34). These works not only advocate for a continued legitimacy and value of alternate human experiences and understandings of the passage of time, but they also illuminate how nonhuman materialities play a role in marking the passage of time. Joyce and Woolf suggest in their works that nonhuman materialities experiences the passage of time differently than humans, which leads to the conclusion that temporality is heterogeneous rather than homogeneous. The multiplicity of temporalities presented in Ulysses, To the Lighthouse, and Between the Acts undermine standardized time to present a more inclusive and complete depiction of human and nonhuman temporality. Joyce and Woolf go so far as to structure the temporalities of their novels around the
nonhuman materialities present in their narratives. They create what I would call a temporality of things in their works in place of a temporality of globalization and human standardization.

The nonhuman materialities present in the works of Joyce and Woolf can be interpreted through recent theories of new materialism and object-oriented ontology. Jane Bennett argues in Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things that we have been conditioned to view matter “as passive stuff, as raw, brute, or inert” (vii). She advocates for a “vital materiality” of all matter that can only be recognized once the dichotomy of “life” and “matter” is muddled and intermeshed (vii). Bennett defines “vitality” as “the capacity of things—edibles, commodities, storms, metals—not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as a quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own” (viii). In this way, Bennett wishes to assert that there is an efficacy inherent in the nonhuman materialities of the world—which has always, thanks to the dominance of anthropocentric Western philosophy, been considered exclusive to humans (ix). Bennett’s vital materiality provides a robust framework for interpreting how nonhuman materialities shape the course of Joyce’s and Woolf’s narratives through its material presence and agency.

In a similar vein, Timothy Morton in Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World writes about nonhuman objects that are so vast and imperceptible that they exist outside of human understandings of time and space. He identifies these kind of objects—like “a black hole,” “the Florida Everglades,” “the biosphere,” or even “long-lasting” human-made products like “Styrofoam or plastic bags, or the sum of all the whirring machinery of capitalism” to name a few—as hyperobjects, or “things that are massively distributed in time and space relative to humans” (1). Hyperobjects defy previous philosophical attempts at conceiving a thing in its entirety. Morton writes, “Because they so massively outscale us, hyperobjects have
magnified this weirdness of things for our inspection: things are themselves, but we can’t point to them directly” (12). Though their essential reality is inaccessible to us in their vastness of space and time, Morton explains that hyperobjects “cause us to reflect on our very place on Earth and in the cosmos” so that we must reconsider our understanding of what constitutes being (15). Both Joyce and especially Woolf attempt to render hyperobjects in their works to undermine human conceptions of temporality—an endeavor that is aided by their experimentation with the form of the novel. Morton’s conception of hyperobjects elucidates their efforts to represent the nonhuman and the material that exists beyond human perception of space and time.

Like Bennett and Morton, Ian Bogost in his book Alien Phenomenology, or What It’s Like to Be a Thing defines object-oriented ontology as a vision of the world that “puts things at the center of being” in a way that acknowledges the being of all things, not just human beings (6). He proposes that one way to understand object-oriented ontology is to picture the relationship of objects in an exploded-view diagram (e.g. see fig. 1). The exploded-view diagram is often used in mechanical and technical disciplines to more clearly depict how parts of a complex piece of equipment or machinery are assembled and function in relation to each other. Bogost borrows the visual of the exploded-view diagram to further explain the practice of ontography (51). Exploded-view diagrams, in Bogost’s views, render “unseen situation[s] of things . . . in a way that effectively draws our attention to its configurative nature” (52).
Joyce’s and Woolf’s novels both function as literary exploded-views of the material world in their attentiveness to both humans and nonhuman things in their works as well as their renderings of the passage of time: whether it is an exploded-view of an hour in Dublin on June 16, 1904 in *Ulysses*, an exploded-view of the passage of ten years in an abandoned house on the Isle of Skye in *To the Lighthouse*, or an exploded-view of geological history, human history, and the present moment on the day of a pageant performance in *Between the Acts*. By focusing on and manipulating the passage of time, Joyce and Woolf shift the scope of their narratives to all of the materialities that exist, move, and live within a single moment.

The commanding presence of materialities in these novels coupled with Joyce and Woolf’s alternating visions of the richness of being in the moment and the resilience of being across time enables both of these authors to represent the passage of time from a non-anthropocentric perspective. In Joyce’s and Woolf’s visions of the passage of time, it is clear in their works that they do not believe the passage of time is experienced at a single rate delineated
by standardized clock time. Joyce and Woolf have engaged in what I argue is an essentially modernist aesthetic practice of experimenting with the traditional narrative form of the novel to fully depict materiality, time, and essentially life as it was in the early twentieth century. Their vision of life is inclusive of all materialities in such a vibrant and powerful way that is distinctive in the modernist literary tradition. This totality of vision includes a portrayal of temporality that is complex, variable, and undoubtedy material: a true ecological temporality of things.
Chapter II

The Temporality of Things in the “Wandering Rocks” Episode of *Ulysses*

In Episode 10 of *Ulysses*, titled “Wandering Rocks,” Joyce explicitly focuses on experimenting with the representation of time. “Wandering Rocks” follows the paths of numerous Dubliners from 2:55 p.m. to about 4:00 p.m.—leading up to the beginning of Episode 11, “Sirens”—in nineteen sections that occur in varying degrees of simultaneity in the narrative. The main characters of each section come into contact with the same things, cross paths, witness the actions of others, and converse with or overhear the conversations of others in Joyce’s attempt to display the richness of the moment in a city like Dublin. Joyce is able to represent a sense of that richness and the simultaneity of being by weaving the same objects, people, happenings, and dialogue throughout multiple sections. Don Gifford notes that the nineteen sections of “Wandering Rocks” are “interrupted by interpolated actions that are temporally simultaneous but spatially remote from the central action in which the interpolation occurs” (260). In these interpolations, which occur throughout *Ulysses* as well, Joyce uses the same language to describe the materialities, both human and nonhuman, that reappear in various sections of “Wandering Rocks.” More significantly, the interpolations also complicate a strictly standardized and linear view of temporality, since they complicate time both by pulling the narrative out of its chronological order and by relying on the presence of the material and the nonhuman.

Ecocriticism has increasingly investigated urban modernism in recent years, and critics have also begun to address Joyce’s depiction of the materialities of Dublin in *Ulysses*. Yet, their
analysis often falls short of truly addressing Joyce’s attentiveness to the material. Joyce’s focus on the “here-and-now” in “Wandering Rocks,” according to Anne Fogarty, allows him to more fully represent the present moment in Dublin without the burden of its oppressive history by structuring the episode into different sections that converge and overlap (58–59). She further notes that in “Wandering Rocks,” Joyce discards the “constraints of linearity and logic” to instead create a temporality that is punctuated by a “liberating series of present moments” (59). She touches upon the material in “Wandering Rocks” when she writes how Joyce renders “the material and physical struggles” of the numerous characters as well as their “concrete materialities of a living history” in “Wandering Rocks” (58). Near the end of her chapter, she again returns to this idea when she states, “As elsewhere in Ulysses, the narrative insistently focuses on the physicality and material dimensions of concrete existence” (76). In these instances, Fogarty scratches the surface of the prevalence of the material in “Wandering Rocks,” but she does not address the role of the material directly in her analysis. Her analysis accounts for Joyce’s use of the material as a part of rendering the history of Dublin, a material history in which the very materiality of Dublin is laden with human history. Joyce does certainly highlight how Dublin’s current political climate permeates the intersecting quotidian lives of Dubliners in all socio-economic classes in “Wandering Rocks,” specifically in his characters’ attitudes toward the church and state that are expressed throughout the episode. However, his focus on the material in his rendering of temporality often does not center around a human character or fit into a “living history” of humanity. In these interpolations, materialities speak for themselves as parts in Joyce’s temporal structure of the episode.

Kathleen McCormick undertakes a task similar to mine in her chronicling and categorizing of all of the interpolations that appear in “Wandering Rocks.” She argues that there
are many ways to interpret the interpolations in the episode, first suggesting that it is “easiest” to view the interpolations as Joyce’s “technique” for representing the synchronicity of the sections of “Wandering Rocks.” She explains that readers will oftentimes try to find “more intricate causal interpretations” of the interpolations in their relation to the section they interrupt rather than assigning the interpolations “simple temporal” relationships (276). In this way, she explicitly discourages attempts to analyze how these interpolations structure Joyce’s nonlinear temporality of the episode on a deeper level than simply rendering moments of simultaneous action. Perhaps Joyce did purposefully place his interpolations throughout “Wandering Rocks” in some sort of causal structure, and that is certainly one of many ways to try and interpret what Joyce is trying to represent in this episode. However, I believe viewing “Wandering Rocks” in this way is limiting, as McCormick’s interpretation of the episode fails to account for its overwhelming materiality. Her attempts to find meaning in how the interpolations relate to characters and plot of the sections in which they appear, as well as encouraging others to do the same, does not seem to include recognizing the materiality of the nonhuman things that also constitute the interpolations. Only looking for causal relationships between the interpolations and the sections in which they appear risks overlooking Joyce’s larger project of representing the city of Dublin as completely on spatial, temporal, and material levels as possible in the form of the novel.

Elizabeth Inglesby does directly acknowledge Joyce’s rendering of nonhuman materialities in *Ulysses* in her analysis of the attention Joyce gives to objects throughout the novel. She describes objects in *Ulysses* as “presences so unobtrusive and incidental that they appear thoroughly dispensable at first glance,” although in reality, they “provide the bedrock for Joyce’s creation, a crucial layer of linguistic and material reality in which a blade of grass
occupies the same moral, etymological, and physical universe as the giant, the budding genius, or
the Everyman” (292–293). Inglesby argues that the nonhuman materialities in Joyce “speak” in
the text throughout Ulysses. Joyce’s representations of the material, making it occupy an
equivalent amount of space in the narrative of the episode as his human characters, allow him “to
challenge traditional hierarchies of importance that have long dominated discussions of
humanity’s place in the physical realm” (293). She further argues that readers of Ulysses need to
look deeper into the text to realize the agency and role of nonhuman materialities in the narrative
(295). Ulysses therefore “breaks new ground” in its depiction of “a world in which all elements
can potentially command equal attention” (317). Inglesby also notes that the “narrative of the
material” in Ulysses relies on Joyce’s use of repeated language and appearances throughout the
novel. This repetition allows for the agency of objects to become more visible through the layers
of the text as Joyce purposefully draws attention to their reoccurring presences in different
sections of “Wandering Rocks.” She concludes that Joyce’s depictions of the nonhuman world
conflate with Joyce’s “expansive vision” of Ulysses as a “potentially limitless framework” for
representing human and nonhuman existence both on the same planes of subjectivity (317).
“Wandering Rocks” ultimately invites its readers to acknowledge the existence of all
materialities and the roles they play in rendering the temporality of the episode as opposed solely
focusing on Joyce’s human characters.

Although several scholars have hovered around the presence and agency of things in
Ulysses, theories of materiality have yet to be sufficiently applied to the myriad of things that
Joyce purposefully represents as a part of his vision of an hour in Dublin in “Wandering Rocks.”
Object-oriented ontology is one theoretical framework that can be used to analyze and interpret
the vibrancy of materialities that Joyce presents in the episode. As previously mentioned, Ian
Bogost in *Alien Phenomenology, or What It’s Like to Be a Thing* defines object-oriented ontology as a vision of the world that includes both humans and nonhuman materialities in a conception of being, rather than only considering humans as “beings” (6). I believe Joyce’s rendering of human and nonhuman materialities in “Wandering Rocks” also embodies Jane Bennett’s conception of “vital materialism,” which considers the role and the agency of the nonhuman as well as the human in the world. Her goal in *Vibrant Matter* is “to highlight what is typically cast in the shadow: the material agency or effectivity of nonhuman or not-quite-human things” (ix). In “Wandering Rocks,” Joyce similarly “highlights” the multifarious levels of being in Dublin as he turns his attention to nonhuman materialities as much as he focuses on the movements and interactions of his human characters. In this way, Joyce is able to recreate in *Ulysses* the most complete vision of Dublin he possibly could in writing.

Joyce’s interpolations not only work to suggest a simultaneity of events occurring within the episode, but also to create an alternate temporal structure composed of all of the things he presents in “Wandering Rocks,” both human and nonhuman. Shan-Yun Huang comments that the overabundance of simultaneous events undermines, if not completely eliminates, a linear temporal structure in “Wandering Rocks,” despite the episode’s direct references to standardized time and the canonical hours (592). Both the canonical hours as well as standardized clock time are referenced in “Wandering Rocks” as religious and secular temporal structures, but Joyce’s vision of temporality includes much more. The human, the nonhuman, and their interactions with each other combine to act as time markers in a temporality that revolves around the concrete and the material, not just the abstract and relatively arbitrary temporal systems set in place by the church and state—both being institutions (“masters”) which Stephen takes issue in Episode 1, “Telemachus” (Joyce 1.636–644). In this way, Joyce’s depiction of the passage of time in
“Wandering Rocks” invites one to consider all materialities, both human and nonhuman, on the same plane of being and agency. Through his rendering of a temporality that is full of things—in contrast with traditional anthropocentric renderings of the passage of time in literature—all of the materialities he depicts within an hour in Dublin equally function to mark the passage of time and simultaneity of events throughout the episode.

Joyce is able to represent the richness of materiality and being through his many interpolations of materialities into sections to which they do not spatially occur. These interpolations, while highlighting the diverse materiality of Dublin in their reoccurrences throughout the episode, are also key to Joyce’s rendering of temporality in “Wandering Rocks.” In his chapter on “Wandering Rocks” in *Bloomers on the Liffey: Eisegetical Readings of Joyce’s Ulysses*, Paul Van Caspel explains that the interpolations “indicate that the action of the section the fragment has been excised from is . . . more or less simultaneous with the action of the section into which this fragment has been transplanted” (142). Van Caspel’s use of the terms “transplanted” here as well as “grafted” later on in the chapter are quite appropriate to describe how the interpolations are woven into sections to which they do not spatially belong (142, 146).

Although interrupting the narrative of a novel with events occurring in different spaces and times than the narrative present time is not new to literature, Van Caspel notes that Joyce’s use of this technique does not explicitly “warn” the reader when a shift in narration and place occurs (143).

However, Joyce does provide clues to when he inserts snippets from other sections into sections where they spatially do not occur by using the same or very similar language in his insertions. Through his repetition of the wording used to describe each interpolation, the reader is able to identify when Joyce is deviating from the spatial location of each section. The lack of an overt “warning” when Joyce switches the spatial dimensions of the sections through his
interpolations undermines the traditional linearity and continuity of narratives. In a way, the words Joyce repeats throughout the episode also become objects themselves. The manner in which Joyce often directly “transplants” and “grafts” language from parts of “Wandering Rocks” and replicates it throughout the episode elevates his words to function as concrete embodiments of his interpolations. The words Joyce uses to describe his interpolations often move throughout the spatial locations and temporal frames of the episode in the same way his interpolated materialities do. An interpolation can therefore be identified as much by its repeated wording as by repeated characters and objects, making the words Joyce chooses to repeat throughout the episode seem material on their own.

Joyce begins “Wandering Rocks” by contextualizing the episode within several temporal structures that he will continue to reference as well as subvert through his depiction of a temporality of things. The first section focuses on Father Conmee, whom Joyce situates within different structures of time. He resets his watch to 2:55 p.m. and begins to walk across Dublin in the first lines of the episode (Joyce 10.1–3). In a sense, Father Conmee seems to set his watch to initiate the action of the episode and sync himself with the movements of the other characters as well as with global standardized time, which was, as Kern notes, a relatively new structure of time that was only officially implemented twenty years previous in 1884 (12). Alexandra Anyfanti in her essay “Time, Space, and Consciousness in James Joyce's Ulysses” explains that “clock-time” is simply a “means of organizing matter” in a man-made structure that subverts other temporalities, like individual experiences of time in the self-conscious (1). She argues that in Ulysses, Joyce actively deconstructs the “temporal and spatial frameworks” that he presents in the novel (2). In his manipulation of space and time throughout Ulysses and especially in
“Wandering Rocks,” Joyce effectively “reveals the multidimensionality that lurks behind the flatness and singularity of clock time and of physical appearance” (3).

Father Conmee is further associated with structures of time, beyond the standardized time of his watch, when he is depicted “reading his office” or his breviary, which dictates what prayers should be said at each of the eight canonical hours throughout the day (Joyce 10.184). According to his breviary, it is Nones, which should be read in the early afternoon around 3:00 p.m. (Gifford 264). Joyce’s description of Father Conmee reading his breviary gives the reader a sense of what time it is in the narrative. However, this description may be misleading, as the last reference to Father Conmee indicates that he is “murmuring vespers” after “having read his little hours” (Joyce 10.842–843). Gifford notes that the eight canonical hours are divided into four “great” hours and four “little” hours. Vespers, to be read at sunset, is one of the great hours, while Nones is one of the little hours (264). Father Conmee is late in reading Nones, as the narrator comments, “He should have read that before lunch” (Joyce 10.191).

As he is seen later in the episode reciting his Vespers, this image is at first misleading because, being close to 4:00 p.m. in the narrative, it would not be time for Father Conmee to begin saying his Vespers on a summer afternoon when the sun would have set later in the evening. It is possible that Father Conmee has decided to recite his Vespers early since he was late in reading his Nones, but for a reader who knows the canonical hours, this image of Father Conmee murmuring Vespers close to 4:00 p.m. would seem quite odd. The mention of Vespers also makes this interpolation of Father Conmee seem to occur later in time than its actual occurrence in the narrative in its association with the sunset and the end of the day, which misleads the reader into thinking that much more time has passed. Joyce seems to purposefully muddle his representation of the canonical hours in a way that renders them as unreliable.
markers of time throughout “Wandering Rocks,” since both references to the canonical hours are of them not being read or recited at their proper times by Father Conmee. Thus, Joyce seems to characterize Father Conmee as a model of living according to standardized time only to subvert this role. Joyce therefore underscores the conflict or tension between subjective and standardized time.

Joyce places material references to structures of time throughout “Wandering Rocks” through his description of various objects associated with the telling of time. Huang points out that there are several references to clocks and watches in the episode. He identifies, “Conmee’s ‘smooth watch,’ Blazes Boylan’s ‘gold watch,’ ‘O’Neill’s clock,’ ‘Mickey Anderson’s watches,’ and John Henry Menton’s ‘fat gold hunter watch’” in addition to the “skyblue clocks” on Boylan’s socks seen in the nineteenth section (Joyce 10.01–02, 10.312, 10.509, 10.988, 10.1230–31, 10.1242; Huang 593). There is also an additional reference that Huang overlooked to a “gold watch and chain” just before the mention of O’Neill’s clock (Joyce 10.507). Joyce’s descriptions of the very materiality of the pocket watches themselves evokes a metaphorical image of time as “smooth” and “golden.” In this way, Joyce effectively characterizes standardized time, which is in reality abstract and immaterial, as reliable, infallible, and the highest quality of means to measure the passage time.

Joyce’s mentioning of time pieces in “Wandering Rocks” also represents a wide range of time pieces throughout Dublin. These various time pieces undermine a structure of standardized time because it would not have been possible in 1904 to effectively standardize time across individual pocket watches and clocks. In fact, Bloom thinks to himself in Episode 13, “Nausicaa,” “Wrist watches are always going wrong” when he realizes his watch has stopped (13.984). Gifford’s annotation to this thought of Bloom’s notes that wrist watches were
“relatively new and undependable curiosities in 1904,” and their reliability in timekeeping did not increase until after 1910, when watch technology advanced to decrease how much watches were affected by electrical and magnetic disturbances (397). Time in this sense, even standardized time, was much more subjective in 1904 due to the limitations of timekeeping technology in contrast with the standardized time transmitted by technological devices of today.

By mentioning these different time pieces throughout “Wandering Rocks” and subsequently having Bloom’s wrist watch stop in “Nausicaa,” Joyce undermines the notion of standardized time as an objective temporal structure in a display of the material reality of fallible time pieces throughout Dublin.

Joyce’s last reference to a pocket watch in “Wandering Rocks” destabilizes this characterization of standardized time. The last mention of a pocket watch in “Wandering Rocks” (besides the watch pattern on Boylan’s socks) is John Henry Menton’s “fat gold hunter watch.” Huang clips his reference to this last image of a watch short in his previously mentioned listing of time pieces throughout “Wandering Rocks” to exclude Joyce’s peculiar description of how John Henry Menton is holding his watch as the viceregal cavalcade goes by: “John Henry Menton, filling the doorway of Commercial Buildings, stared from winebig oyster eyes, holding a fat gold hunter watch not looked at in his fat hand not feeling it” (Joyce 10.1229–1231). This final mention of a pocket watch presents a strange image of standardized time being physically present in the form of a “fat gold hunter watch” but also of time being simultaneously ignored and unrecognized by the person holding the watch. Menton has become so accustomed to holding his pocket watch in his hand to look at the time that he no longer feels its presence there in this scene. His pocket watch, and standardized time itself, has become something natural to him: almost a part of his biology. In reality, standardized time is unnatural, inorganic, and, as
Kern notes, only a twenty-year-old structure of the passage of time and a product of history. Joyce suggests with this final image of a time piece that standardized time is not as absolute as humanity created it to be, as evidenced by Menton’s naturalization of his pocket watch with his body.

Clearly, Joyce firmly situates “Wandering Rocks” within standardized systems of time that are structured and regulated by the church and state through his depictions of Father Conmee and material representations of standardized time. However, Joyce continues to insert interpolations of objects, actions, and characters into sections they spatially do not occur to create an alternate temporality, one defined by both human and nonhuman materialities, in his attempt to render the entirety of an hour in Dublin. Father Conmee’s section is full of materialities that will reappear throughout the rest of the episode either as actual spatial and temporal reoccurrences in other sections or merely as one of Joyce’s many interpolations. These interpolations include not only human characters that reappear throughout the episode, but also nonhuman materialities—like flashy clothes, crutches, song lyrics, and a twig to name a few. Therefore, his section is ripe for analyzing the interpolations that either appear or originate throughout the first section.

Father Conmee first encounters “a onelegged sailor, swinging himself onward by lazy jerks of his crutches” who “growled some notes” (10.7–8). This sailor is seen again in the third section a few pages later, and Joyce repeats the same descriptors he used before: the onelegged sailor “crutched himself,” “jerked,” and “swung himself” up Eccles Street and “growled unamiably” a patriotic song about England as he progresses (10.228–235). When the onelegged sailor appears a final time as interpolation in the section where Buck Mulligan and Haines are in the D.B.C. Tearoom, he again “growled” the same song he was singing earlier, except he has
made some progress and is now on Nelson Street (10.1063–1064). The reappearance of the onelegged sailor seems to undermine a linear temporality and rather present a progression of time that is circular in its materiality. Time moves forward as the sailor crutches along, but Joyce repeatedly returns to describe the sailor in such a material way that it disrupts the forward progression of time in the narrative. In this way, the reader is jarred by the repeated visions of the sailor into thinking reflexively back to the instance in which he is first mentioned.

Another minor character named Mr. Denis J. Maginni, is inserted into the first section as an interpolation and similarly reappears in the narrative like the onelegged sailor. He is described as being dressed ostentatiously “in silk hat, slate frockcoat with silk facings, white kerchief tie, tight lavender trousers, canary gloves and pointed patent boots” and as walking “with grave deportment” by Dignam’s court (10.56–60). He is similarly inserted into the narrative later on O’Connell bridge with the same “grave deportment and gay apparel” as Joyce interpolates him into the tenth section that focuses on Bloom (10.599–600). Maginni is seen a final time as he “gaily appareled, gravely walked” by Pigott’s music warerooms as the viceregal cavalcade drives by him on Grafton Street (Joyce 10.1239–1240, Gifford 286). Joyce’s description of Maginni is utterly material to the point that his entire character is defined by his clothes. His clothes reflect his personality, but they also function as objects in and of themselves by catching the attention of both the narrator of “Wandering Rocks” and the reader.

Joyce’s rendering of the material in “Wandering Rocks” reaches deeper than what is generally considered to be material, specifically in his depictions of the onelegged sailor and Mr. Denis J. Maginni. The onelegged sailor and Mr. Denis J. Maginni are similarly identified throughout the episode by externally observable objects, like the sailor’s crutches and Maginni’s garish clothing. The onelegged sailor and Mr. Denis J. Maginni ultimately seem to be a sum of
their material parts, only identifiable by the things constituting their outward appearance. Joyce essentially defines both Mr. Denis J. Maginni and the onelegged sailor by external characteristics and their actions in passing moments. His attention to observable surface details, which are indeed material, is crucial to his rich rendering of all that constitutes an hour in Dublin. Ultimately, Joyce has flipped how characters are conventionally defined in his focus on the materiality of his characters, which rings true for the onelegged sailor as well whose impaired body becomes his identifier rather than his name. Even the names Joyce chose for these characters are tied to their material natures: the onelegged sailor is indeed missing a leg, and lengthy name like Mr. Denis J. Maginni seems fitting for such an ostentatious character.

The onelegged sailor and Maginni are also both identifiable by their distinctive bodies, and particularly their walks throughout the episode. The sailor is repeatedly described as “jerking” and “swinging” his way along, and Maginni’s “grave” gait is also repeatedly mentioned by Joyce. His focus on how the bodies of these characters move emphasizes their materiality as human bodies—bodies which are constituted of both human and nonhuman things. Stacy Alaimo focuses on the materiality of the human body and how this materiality intermeshes the human with the nonhuman through what she calls “trans-corporeality” in Bodily Natures: Science, the Environment, and the Material Self. She stresses that trans-corporeality is “a recognition not just that everything is interconnected but that humans are the very stuff of the material, emergent world” (20). The human body is therefore a trans-corporeal body in its composition of human and nonhuman materialities. Along those lines, Donna Haraway notes in When Species Meet that human genomes are only found in ten percent of cells that “occupy the mundane space” of the human body. She continues to explain that “the other 90 percent of the cells are filled with the genomes of bacteria, fungi, protists, and such, some of which play in a
symphony to my being alive at all, and some of which are hitching a ride and doing the rest of me, of us, no harm” (3–4). According to Alaimo and Haraway, the human body is material, and Joyce’s treatment of the human body as a means of rendering temporality points to this fact. His repetition of the characteristics of the human bodies of his characters to identify them throughout their reoccurrences in the episode acknowledges that the human body is material, which implicitly recognizes that it is a mesh of both human and nonhuman materiality.

The onelegged sailor’s song, which is intangible speech, also becomes material in its written form in the novel. Inglesby comments on Joyce’s material language when she writes, “Just as actual objects must become words in order to exist in books, Ulysses makes words behave as much as possible like objects to underscore the potential power that they have to impinge upon the vision of both the characters and the audience” (301–302). The onelegged sailor’s song becomes material through Joyce’s repetition of the “notes” he “growled” throughout the episode, which function on the same levels as his crutches, his walk, as well as his lack of a leg to identify his reappearances in the episode. In this way, the language of the sailor’s song becomes material as it is intermeshed within Joyce’s repeated depiction of the character, much in the same way the wording of the interpolations themselves becomes material through Joyce’s repetition. The song itself also evokes materiality, as it references English patriotism and conjures images of the military, the British Empire, and Ireland’s turbulent relations with England. Joyce effectively connects disparate scenes together that otherwise would not converge through a linkage of materiality and repeated descriptive language.

All of these materialities are encountered at the beginning of Father Conmee’s walk, demonstrating the rich materiality in particular of the first section of “Wandering Rocks.” As he continues on his walk, Father Conmee encounters more human and nonhuman materialities that
become interpolations in other sections of the episode. He walks past Corny Kelleher and observes him as he “totted figures in the daybook while he chewed a blade of hay” (Joyce 10.97–98). Father Conmee also sees a constable “on his beat,” and they exchange a salute (10.98–99). These interactions serve as the beginning of the second section which focuses on Corny Kelleher. Corny is seen closing his “daybook” that he was just writing in, and he is still “chewing his blade of hay” (10.207–210). Father Conmee continues to walk through Clongowes field and begins to read his breviary while his “thinsocked ankles were tickled by the stubble” of the grass in the field, and this scene is later interpolated into the fourth section with the Dedalus sisters (10.185–186, 10.264–265). As Father Conmee is reading his breviary, he witnesses “a flushed young man” climb out from behind a hedge with a “young woman” after their assignation. Father Conmee casts his judgment on the couple as the woman “with slow care detached from her light skirt a clinging twig,” and she is also seen again, described using the exact same wording, detaching the twig from her skirt in the eighth section (10.199–202, 10.440–441).

Joyce chooses to define these interpolations by their materiality in a way that again is unconventional in his description of his recursive characters. In her first chapter of Vibrant Matter, Bennett discusses the nature of “thing-power,” which she defines as “the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle” (6). Thing-power acknowledges the agency of the ostensibly passive object and recognizes its materiality and efficacy in its acknowledgment of “the strange ability of ordinary . . . items to exceed their status as objects and manifest traces of independence or aliveness” (xvi). Material things found in the interpolations of “Wandering Rocks” certainly do have an ability to affect not only the narrative, but how the readers construct meaning from it. Corny Kelleher is immediately recognizable and
contextualized within Joyce’s temporality of “Wandering Rocks” because of the objects that he is interacting with. The reader can assume that not much time has passed between the first and second sections, as Corny was writing in his daybook in the first section and closing it in the other while chewing on the same blade of hay. In addition to the mention of Corny’s blade of hay as a defining object of his character, both the grass tickling Father Conmee’s ankles as he walks across Clongowes field and the twig that entangles itself in the young woman’s skirt dominate these interpolations with what Bennett would consider to be their material agency and thing-power. In these instances, the very materiality of the objects and things featured in Joyce’s descriptions defines his human characters.

Joyce links Father Conmee’s walk in the first section of “Wandering Rocks” with the rest of the episode by clearly focusing on the materialities present in each interpolation. The onelegged sailor, Mr. Denis J. Maginni, Corny Kelleher, the flushed young man and woman, and even Father Conmee himself are all represented in the text not only as human beings, but also alongside the nonhuman materialities that Joyce latches onto in his repeated depictions of his characters. The onelegged sailor’s crutches, song, and gait are referenced each time he appears in the episode. Similarly, although they are only described in detail in the first section, Mr. Denis J. Maginni’s clothes and gait are mentioned in all of the instances in which he appears in the text. Corny Kelleher is still holding the same daybook and chewing on the same blade of hay that Father Conmee sees. The blades of grass tickle Father Conmee’s ankles as he is seen multiple times walking across Clongowes field reading his breviary. The twig has caught itself on the young woman’s skirt both during the events of the first section as well as the eighth, directly linking these episodes temporally.
Through identifying these minor characters by their accompanying materialities, Joyce is able to insert these characters either spatially or temporally into Father Conmee’s walk and elsewhere throughout “Wandering Rocks.” In this way, these materialities function as time-markers in Joyce’s temporal structure and indicate the speed of the passage of time in this episode. Joyce has upended narrative conventions by creating characters who are solely defined and identifiable by the materialities associated with them in later sections of “Wandering Rocks,” rather than by any descriptions of their physical appearances or human characteristics as is typical of most literary descriptions of characters. It is this continuity of objects, actions, people, and language used by Joyce to describe them all that links different sections together as taking place within the same moments of time. The events of the episode can be contextualized based on what people, actions, or objects appear in multiple sections rather than by the clock.

In the second section of “Wandering Rocks,” Joyce depicts two parallel actions that occur simultaneously, something he does not repeat in the rest of the episode. Strikingly, this single instance of parallelism involves the movement of two objects. While Corny Kelleher spits “a silent jet of hayjuice” from his mouth, similarly, “a generous white arm”—which presumably belongs to Molly Bloom—is described as simultaneously reaching out of a window on Eccles Street and flinging a coin out into the street in the second and third sections of the episode (10.221–223, 10.251–253). In the third section, Molly’s arm is seen flinging the coin out her window as she previously did in sync with Corny’s hayjuice in the second section. Joyce interpolates Molly flinging the coin at the precise moment that Corny spits out hayjuice in the second section in order to show that the two objects are flying through the air in Dublin at once. These two sections, which are occurring in two different places, are linked together through two objects simultaneously moving through the air, rather than by the human characters attached to
these objects. In this instance, Joyce has inverted traditional narrative conventions, as the text is truly object-oriented in its focus.

Joyce structures this instance of simultaneity around objects to the extent that Molly’s arm is even presented as simply a “plump bare generous arm” and not in the context of the arm belonging to Molly. The arm itself is material on its own in the absence of a clearly defined human body to which it is attached, a depiction of the human body that aligns with how Alaimo and Haraway view the materiality of the human body. In this way, Joyce asks his readers to conceive of the human body as an object and to rely on their previous knowledge of the narrative to even identify the character who is attached to the arm. Joyce’s description of the arm flinging the coin in time with the hay juice is certainly strange, but it highlights a kind of urban and material temporality in which many materialities are unknowingly moving in sync with each other through time. Another object that marks time in “Wandering Rocks” that is associated with Molly is the card advertising Unfurnished Apartments which also falls from the window at the same time Molly flings a coin and Corny spits hay juice (10.250–251). In the ninth section, the card is seen replaced in the window, indicating that the events of this section occur after it has initially fallen out of the window in another display of objects marking the passage of time (10.542–543). By aligning the movement of these objects, Joyce creates a temporality defined by how and when these objects move in the episode, again highlighting their agency and ability to function as markers of the passage of time in “Wandering Rocks.” It is in these mundane objects that Joyce continues to develop a representation of the passage of time that is not subject to human logic or standardization, but rather is explicitly object-oriented.

The fourth section, which takes place in the Dedalus home, has several interpolations that are identified by Gifford: Father Conmee is described walking through Clongowes field, a
lacquey rings a bell at the door of Dillon’s auctionrooms, and a crumpled Elijah throwaway is seen floating down the River Liffey (265). In this section as well as the first—and as mentioned earlier—Father Conmee’s “thinsocked ankles were tickled by the stubble of Clongowes field,” versus “Father Conmee walked through Clongowes fields, his thinsocked ankles tickled by stubble” in the fourth section with the Dedalus girls (10.264–265, 10.264–265). In this interpolation of Father Conmee, the grass of the field is highlighted as causing Father Conmee’s ankles, on which he put too thin of socks, to itch. The grass’s ability to affect Father Conmee creates an opening for Joyce to note this interaction as a marker of Father Conmee’s position in the field to further structure his temporality in “Wandering Rocks.” The fact that Father Conmee has made it to Clongowes field means that he is nearing the end of his walk, which helps situate when the Dedalus sisters arrive at home within timeline of the rest of the episode. Ultimately, Joyce upsets the traditional anthropocentric focus of narratives by focusing on the agency of the grass on those who walk through it ill-equipped. By describing the grass as “stubble,” Joyce subtly suggests that the grass has been mowed down. However, despite man’s attempt to groom the grass, Joyce displays how the mowed grass is not quite tamed in yet another interpolation where the nonhuman is the dominant player and temporal marker.

The interpolation of the lacquey ringing the bell in the fourth section spatially belongs in the eleventh section, in which Dilly Dedalus is standing outside of Dillon’s auctionrooms. The interpolation occurs moments before Katey Dedalus asks her sisters where Dilly has gone. Maggy replies that Dilly has “Gone to meet father,” and in the eleventh section, we discover that Dilly corners her father, Simon Dedalus, to try and manipulate him to give her some money (10.289). In both instances, the sound of the lacquey’s bell, “Barang!,” is heard (10.282, 10.650). The “Barang!” of the bell is a quite literal rendering of Inglesby’s idea that objects “speak” in
Ulysses (293). She states that Ulysses attempts “to penetrate the silence of the object-world and to write its voice into the novel, preserving all the while an awareness of the impossibility of ever fully liberating this voice from the very human language Joyce employs to try to capture it” (297). Joyce’s rendering of the sound of the bell not only marks the time throughout the episode, but he also attempts to allow the bell to speak for itself as an object by trying to replicate the sound it makes, even if he is limited by human language as Inglesby pointed out. Without the bell, the lacquey would be unable to emit such a sound that commands the attention of the reader just as much as it annoys Simon Dedalus (Joyce 10.690). Joyce therefore inserts both Father Conmee and the lacquey ringing the bell into the section with the Dedalus children as interpolations to contextualize their section with the rest of the episode. Father Conmee, with the addition of the lacquey with his bell, continues to act as the time-marker in this relatively isolated section in Joyce’s attempt to render simultaneity in Ulysses. As the events of “Wandering Rocks” progress, Joyce continues to layer his temporality with additional object-oriented interpolations, creating a temporality that is increasingly circular rather than linear.

One object in particular that Joyce repeatedly returns to in “Wandering Rocks” is the “crumpled” “Elijah is coming” throwaway that appears floating down the Liffey initially in this episode in the fourth section (10.294–297). This is perhaps the same one that Bloom has earlier thrown into the river, although this singularity is debated by John Hannay in his article specifically focusing on the Elijah throwaway. Hannay initially argues that Joyce manipulates his text to try and erroneously lead his readers to view two different appearances of a character, event, or object as the same through his interpolations throughout the episode. For example, Hannay notes that the posters of Marie Kendall that are seen by Miss Dunne, Lenehan and M’Coy, Patrick Dignam, and William Humble, earl of Dudley, in the viceregal cavalcade cannot
be the same poster due to their differing locations throughout Dublin. He cautions readers to read the episode carefully to avoid wrongfully associating disparate objects, people, or happenings, even if considering them all to be the same “might lead to a meaningful connection” (434). He argues that the Elijah throwaway may be one of Joyce’s traps for his readers (434). Bloom first receives the Elijah throwaway in Episode 8, “Lestrygonians,” from a “somber Y. M. C. A. young man,” and it details to him that “Elijah is coming” (Joyce 8.5–16). After considering the throwaway and thinking to himself for a few moments, Bloom decides to get rid of it by throwing it into a group of seagulls to see if they will eat it: “He threw down among them a crumpled paper ball. Elijah thirtytwo feet per sec is com. Not a bit. The ball bobbed unheedened on the wake of swells, floated under by the bridgepiers” (8.57–59).

The image of the crumpled, floating Elijah throwaway in the fourth section is clearly an interpolation on Joyce’s part because the Dedalus children also cannot view it floating down the Liffey from inside their home. It can possibly be identified as the same throwaway discarded by Bloom through its parallel descriptors used to describe the throwaway in its first sighting: “A skiff, a crumpled throwaway, Elijah is coming, rode lightly down the Liffey, under Loopline bridge, shooting the rapids where water chafed around the bridgepiers, sailing eastward past hulls and anchorchains between the Customhouse old dock and George’s quay” (10.294–297). The throwaway has floated from where Bloom dropped it off of O’Connell bridge eastward to the Loopline bridge within the span of two hours, and it continues to float eastward throughout the episode. However, Hannay notes that the distance between O’Connell bridge and the second sighting of the Elijah throwaway under the Loopline bridge is only about a fifth of a mile. He believes it is highly unlikely that it took the throwaway over two hours to travel that distance on the Liffey, regardless of how slowly the river may have flowed in 1904 (435).
Hannay counters his disbelief by also acknowledging that Joyce does devote notable attention to the progress of the Elijah throwaway throughout “Wandering Rocks,” meaning Joyce must have done so intentionally. He continues to suggest, which I agree is plausible, that the throwaway was blocked in flowing down the Liffey by various “obstructions” in the river (435). On the other hand, Hannay points out Joyce’s description of the throwaway as being able to float relatively freely down the Liffey, as Joyce describes how it “bobbed unheeded on the wake of swells” in “Lestrygonians” and later “rode lightly down the Liffey, under Loopline bridge, shooting the rapids . . . sailing eastward past hulls and anchorchains” in “Wandering Rocks” (Joyce 8.58–59, 10.294–296). Therefore, Hannay concludes that it seems highly unlikely that the Elijah throwaway in “Lestrygonians” is the same one repeatedly spotted in “Wandering Rocks” (436). However, I do not think whether or not the same throwaway that is interpolated throughout “Wandering Rocks” is necessarily grounds to dismiss its strong material presence throughout the episode and the rest of *Ulysses*.

In the twelfth section, Joyce cuts to a view of the Elijah throwaway by the North wall and sir John Rogerson’s quay: “a skiff, a crumpled throwaway, rocked on the ferrywash, Elijah is coming” (Joyce 10.752–754). The Elijah throwaway is seen the last time floating in the Liffey in the sixteenth section: “Elijah, skiff, light crumpled throwaway, sailed eastward by flanks of ships and trawlers, amid an archipelago of corks, beyond new Wapping street past Benson’s ferry” (10.1096–1099). Regardless of whether or not the Elijah throwaway seen in “Wandering Rocks” is the same one Bloom dropped off of O’Connell bridge in “Lestrygonians,” the fact that it is repeatedly spotted floating down the Liffey three times throughout “Wandering Rocks”—four if you count when Almidano Artifoni sees “Elijah’s name announced on the Metropolitan hall”
cannot be ignored in a reading of “Wandering Rocks,” as the throwaway is the most interpolated materiality in the episode.

The River Liffey is also represented in the interpolations of the Elijah throwaway in a way that is intrinsically tied to Joyce’s attempt to render the whole of Dublin in *Ulysses*. The Liffey, which flows throughout Dublin, is depicted throughout the novel, but it surfaces to the forefront of the narrative particularly in “Wandering Rocks” in Joyce’s mentioning of the progress of the Elijah throwaway floating down the river. As previously explained, Timothy Morton defines in *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* what he calls *hyperobjects* as “things that are massively distributed in time and space relative to humans” (1). Hyperobjects, according to Morton, are impossible to conceive of in their entirety due to their existence across time and distribution across space (12). The Liffey, as a river that is a part of a larger water system that extends and flows outside of Dublin, is a hyperobject. Although Joyce aims to represent Dublin in its entirety in *Ulysses*, he cannot fully represent the Liffey due to its vastness as an object across time as well as space. A water system like the one to which the Liffey is a part is so massive that the origin of where the water system of the Liffey begins (if one could even determine such an origin) is perhaps not experiencing the passage of time in the same way as where the river ends. Joyce can, however, draw attention to part of the Liffey’s being as a water system and its materiality as a hyperobject by depicting how it carries a much smaller object like the Elijah throwaway on its currents throughout Dublin in *Ulysses*. In this way, Joyce includes the Liffey in his depiction of the materiality of “Wandering Rocks,” even if he cannot represent the river in its entirety.¹ The presence of the River Liffey throughout the

¹ In Episode 17, “Ithaca,” Joyce seems to experiment with rendering the course of the flow of tap water to Bloom’s kitchen sink, as well as an exhaustive listing of the qualities of water in general, in an extended and highly detailed description. This further points to his desire to represent something massive like a water system in its entirety (See 17.163–228).
novel simultaneously undermines his attempt to render Dublin in its entirety even as his
depiction of the river adds to the totality of his vision. His representation of Dublin would not be
cOMPlete without including the Liffey, but at the same time, his depiction of the river also
highlights the impossibility of rendering any material thing in its entirety.

Blazes Boylan is another character besides Father Conmee whose presence in
“Wandering Rocks” is intermeshed with materialities in Joyce’s rendering of temporality.
Boylan appears several times throughout “Wandering Rocks.” He is seen buying a basket of
treats to send to Molly in the fifth section, and his “new tan shoes” are noted in the narration
(Joyce 10.307). At the end of his section, Boylan continues to flirt with the blond girl in
Thornton’s by picking up a red carnation and seductively placing it between his teeth before he
asks “roguishly” if he could “say a word to” her telephone (10.327–336). In the seventh section,
the telephone links the scene with Miss Dunne, Boylan’s secretary, to Boylan’s scene in the fifth
section when she receives a call from Boylan, who he presumably wanted to “say a word to”
(10.394). Later on in the eighteenth section, Patrick Dignam sees “a red flower in a toff’s mouth
and a swell pair of kicks on him” as he is walking (10.1150–1151). The red flower and snappy
shoes link Patrick’s sighting back to Boylan in the fifth section, who is described earlier in
“Wandering Rocks” as having “new tan shoes.” These shoes continue to function as an identifier
of Boylan in the subsequent “Sirens” episode as well. In these instances, Boylan’s movement
throughout “Wandering Rocks” is linked in the episode through objects—the telephone, the
flower, and his shoes—that act not only as identifiable materialities associated with Boylan, but
they also contribute to Joyce’s rendering of temporality as objects that are able to shape and
contextualize the passage of time.
Ultimately, Joyce does continue to note standardized clock time throughout “Wandering Rocks” to situate this episode in relation to the other episodes of *Ulysses*. Father Conmee is seen for the last time in the thirteenth section: “Father Conmee, having read his little hours, walked through the hamlet of Donnycarney, murmuring vespers” (10.842–843). As previously noted, the mention of Vespers signifies that it is getting nearer to 4:00 p.m., and the beginning of “Sirens,” if Father Conmee has begun to say the prayers associated with that canonical hour. Near the end of “Wandering Rocks,” Joyce references both Miss Kennedy and Miss Douce, the barmaids of the Ormond hotel which is to be the setting of “Sirens.” In “Wandering Rocks” as well as “Sirens,” these characters are referred to by their hair color: “Bronze by gold, Miss Kennedy’s head by Miss Douce’s head appeared above the crossblind of the Ormond hotel,” “Above the crossblind of the Ormond hotel, gold by bronze, Miss Kennedy’s head by Miss Douce’s head watched and admired” (10.962–963, 10.1197–1199). Joyce’s decision to identify these barmaids primarily by the color of their hair—which can be considered a nonhuman object since hair is not a living part of the human body—defines these characters by parts of their bodies that are not even alive further complicates his representation of “life” in *Ulysses*. The structure of materiality that Joyce has constructed throughout *Ulysses* and further developed in “Wandering Rocks” continues throughout the rest of the novel. Miss Kennedy and Miss Douce both see the cavalcade ride by in “Sirens” as well, and they are described again primarily by their hair: “Bronze by gold, miss Douce’s head by miss Kennedy’s head, over the crossblind of the Ormond bar heard the viceregal hoofs go by, ringing steel” (11.64–65). In this way, Joyce’s focus on the materiality of Miss Kennedy and Miss Douce’s hair also functions as a part of his larger modernist project that questions how humans perceive and make meaning of the world around them. Joyce’s
attentiveness to the material suggests a way to view the world in its entirety unrestricted by traditional anthropocentric structures of time and space that were so odious to modernist authors.

The viceregal cavalcade is the focus of the nineteenth and final section, and it is representative of the state as Father Conmee is symbolic of the church in “Wandering Rocks.” In a similar way to how the canonical hours are woven into Joyce’s representation of Father Conmee’s character, the viceregal cavalcade also represents a linear progression of time. The viceregal cavalcade is seen riding through the streets of Dublin beginning in the ninth section, where it is described as beginning its journey across Dublin to the Mirus Bazaar: “The gates of the drive opened wide to give egress to the viceregal cavalcade” (10.515–516). It is seen multiple times after it initially sets off until the occupants of the carriage are the focus of the final section (10.709–10.710, 10.794–795, 10.1033–1037). When the cavalcade is described in the twelfth section, the horses pulling the carriage as well as the outriders—who are riding with the cavalcade to provide security and ensure a smooth journey to the bazaar—are mentioned: “A cavalcade in an easy trot along Pembroke quay passed, outriders leaping, leaping in their saddles. Frockcoats. Cream sunshades” (10.794–795). Joyce also draws attention to the “frockcoats” of the outriders and the “cream sunshades” that block sun as well as the streets of Dublin from the view of those inside the carriage. In the fifteenth section, the cavalcade is seen again, and this time the horses of the cavalcade are described in even richer detail: “John Wyse Nolan . . . saw the horses pass Parliament street, harness and glossy pasterns in sunlight shimmering . . . In saddles of the leaders, leaping leaders, rode outriders” (10.1033–1037). The horses, including their saddles and harnesses, are explicitly focused on in this sighting of the cavalcade, as without them the Irish state officials would be traveling by foot or public transportation. The way Joyce
describes the cavalcade, as a mesh of animal, object, and human, can be interpreted as what Bennett would call an “agency of assemblages.”

Bennett presents the concept of an “agency of assemblages” in her second chapter in which she argues that there are collective agencies among groups of nonhuman objects. According to Bennett, materials can strengthen their efficacy by forming heterogeneous assemblages that do not solely derive their agencies from a human source (23). These assemblages are “ad hoc groupings of diverse elements, of vibrant materials of all sorts” that ultimately derive their “agentic capacity” from the vibrant materialities that comprise them (23, 35). Bennett posits that assemblages of “affective bodies” can include both the human and nonhuman in a way that complicates theories of anthropocentric action and agency (24). The viceregal cavalcade can be viewed as an agency of assemblages consisting of horses, state officials, cream sunshades, outriders, harnesses, frockcoats, and centuries of British colonization and political unrest that Joyce combines to form the singular identity of the cavalcade that passes through Dublin. All of these materialities combine in Joyce’s rendering of the cavalcade so that as a whole, it is representative of the state, especially of the British Empire. The collective agency of the cavalcade to embody the British Empire is what causes the episode’s characters to acknowledge it differently depending on whether they are Irish patriots or British sympathizers. Tom Kernan for example rushes to try and wave to the cavalcade, while John Wyse Nolan observes the cavalcade pass with “cool unfriendly eyes” (Joyce 10.796–798, 10.1036).

As the cavalcade passes through Dublin, all that William Humble, earl of Dudley, sees outside of the window during the ride can be viewed as a kind of coda for the episode as a whole. Huang notes that the nineteenth section, which follows the cavalcade as it moves through Dublin, does not contain any interpolations. The cavalcade, acting as an agency of assemblages
representing the rule of the state, seems to restore a linear and chronological temporality as the
episode ends (605). However, the last section is also saturated with the objects, actions, and
characters of the previous sections in the episode that the viceroy sees out of the window of his
carriage. The final section seems to be almost a listing of the majority of human and nonhuman
materialities encountered in the section in the way that Joyce includes such a large number of
materialities that have appeared at various times throughout the episode. Ian Bogost identifies
this listing of materialities as a way that one is able to render the being of all things on an equal
plane—both human and nonhuman, organic and inorganic. In his chapter titled “Ontography:
Revealing the Rich Variety of Being,” Bogost defines what he calls ontography—a concept
derived from ontology—as “a general inscriptive strategy, one that uncovers the repleteness of
units and their interobjectivity” (38). In other words, ontography is a means of cataloguing the
being of things that are often overlooked due to anthropocentric thinking, or the belief that
humans are at the center of being.

I believe object-oriented ontology and ontography relate to Joyce’s rendering of
materialities in how Bogost explains ontography is most easily practiced: by making lists. Bogost
views lists as ontographical in their ability to “loosely” join things “not by logic or power or use
but by the gentle knot of the comma” (38). He also explains that “quasi-ontographical
prototypes” often appear in literature as a means of disrupting the narrative with the “piquancy”
of the material (42). Ontographical lists of things ultimately undermine the “traditional” impulse
toward “artifice” in literature to instead render the “mundaneness” of the everyday (40). This
shift toward the mundane is precisely what Ulysses embodies in Joyce’s choice to chronicle a
day in the life of ordinary characters like Bloom and Stephen. The nineteenth section and Joyce’s
structuring of “Wandering Rocks” as a whole read like a cataloguing of people, objects, natural
phenomena (like the flowing of the Liffey), and events which combine these materialities together into one long ontographical list.

Joyce purposefully breaks his narrative into nineteen parts as opposed to leaving the episode as a structurally homogenous account of the heterogeneity of an hour in the city of Dublin. The three asterisks which separate each of the nineteen sections in “Wandering Rocks” function as dividers in the same way commas do in lists. These asterisks punctuate the narrative to turn “the flowing legato of a literary account into the jarring staccato of being” (Bogost 40). By structuring “Wandering Rocks” in this way, Joyce is able to more fully represent the simultaneity of events and the multiplicity of being than if he would not have broken the episode into sections. The nineteen sections of “Wandering Rocks” represent the multitude of materialities that exist and act within a moment in a way that is, as Bogost writes, rather “jarring.” Joyce has effectively broken from the traditional literary account of narrative and structured “Wandering Rocks” in a fragmented manner. The vitality of things is more clearly represented in the moment due to Joyce’s inclusive rendering of the materiality of Dublin, which thus disrupts the traditional anthropocentric “legato” of narrative. “Wandering Rocks” is like an ontographical list because Joyce makes it clear through structure of the episode that all of the sections are connected and related, as are things placed in lists.

Furthermore, an ontographical listing of things “can do the philosophical work of drawing our attention toward [things] with greater attentiveness” according to Bogost (45). Joyce clearly draws attention toward the material in “Wandering Rocks” not only by its presence in the narrative, but also in how the material plays a role in his construction of temporality in the episode. “Wandering Rocks” thus represents Joyce’s total vision of an hour in the city of Dublin as full of human and nonhuman materialities interacting and intermeshing in varying experiences
of the passage of time. The making of ontographical lists is a way of engaging in the what
Bogost considers to be the “practice” of ontography by providing us with “an account in the
literal sense of the world,” and Joyce provides such an account through his listing of all of the
things existing in an hour in Dublin on June 16, 1904 (50). Joyce’s ontographical account
provides a more complete vision of life in Dublin in *Ulysses*—a vision that encapsulates what
Bogost considers to be the goal of any exercise in ontography: “to draw attention to the countless
things that litter our world unseen” (51).

Even the very title of “Wandering Rocks” evokes materiality more directly than any other
episode of the novel. “Wandering Rocks” are nonhuman things (even if they are mythological
things), and the tenth episode of *Ulysses* is the only episode that is not titled after a living
character in *The Odyssey* (or a place in the case of “Ithaca”). Gifford notes that in *The Odyssey*,
Odysseus is given the choice between trying to safely navigate his way through Scylla and
Charybdis or the Wandering Rocks. Odysseus opts to try and sail between Scylla and Charybdis
to take a chance at avoiding an encounter with either of them. He therefore never encounters the
Wandering Rocks, which have only been successfully navigated by Jason and the Argonauts
thanks to the divine intervention of Hera (Gifford 260). Joyce’s decision to title and structure one
of his episodes in *Ulysses* based on a path that Odysseus did not actually take seems illogical
when considering the parts of *The Odyssey* that correspond with respective episodes of *Ulysses*.
However, I believe that this episode’s title and structure gain some clarity when approached
ontographically. The vast array of materialities present in this episode move through time and
space much like the mythical Wandering Rocks would have moved across the ocean. In
“Wandering Rocks,” Joyce brings Odysseus’s unchosen path to life in *Ulysses* in an episode that
highlights the often disregarded and unnoticed nonhuman materialities that exist and have
agency as things alongside of humans. “Wandering Rocks,” although not actually featured in *The Odyssey*, seems to be a fitting title for this vibrantly material episode of *Ulysses*.

The attention to the material in “Wandering Rocks” cannot be a coincidence, especially when one considers how Joyce wanted to preserve the Dublin he knew in *Ulysses*. Speaking to his friend Frank Budgen, Joyce explained, “I want . . . to give a picture of Dublin so complete that if the city one day suddenly disappeared from the earth it could be reconstructed out of my book” (Budgen 67–68). For Joyce to achieve his goal of creating “A picture of Dublin so complete,” he had to pay attention to and carefully detail all of the human and nonhuman materialities that constituted the Dublin he so earnestly wanted to try to preserve. Joyce recognized that a depiction of Dublin could not be “complete” if he followed the rules of traditional, anthropocentric narratives. Furthermore, Joyce’s focus on the material in “Wandering Rocks,” as opposed to just the movements of his human characters, allows him to create a temporal structure that is inclusive of all the things he depicts in Dublin. This temporality, a temporality of things, subverts the efforts by newly instituted standardized clock time and the traditional canonical hours to regulate all aspects of life and being. His attention to detail, materiality, and simultaneity makes it unnecessary for him to explicitly reference standardized time more than a few times throughout the episode. By structuring the temporality of “Wandering Rocks” around the nonhuman as much as the human, Joyce is able to depict his complete picture of an hour and how the passage of time in that hour is experienced by all materialities in Dublin on June 16, 1904. After all, the Elijah throwaway flowing freely down the Liffey can be seen as much more liberated in its being than the scenes of Father Conmee walking with his nose in his breviary in time with the ticking of his watch.
Chapter III

“Imaginations of the Strangest Kind”: The Materiality of Deep Time in *To the Lighthouse* and *Between the Acts*

Virginia Woolf’s novels *To the Lighthouse* and *Between the Acts* are deeply concerned with the passage of time in the modern world. *To the Lighthouse* devotes its entire middle section titled “Time Passes” to an eerie meditation on the passage of time in a world without humans. In “Time Passes,” Woolf removes the Ramsays from their summer home on the Isle of Skye to turn her focus to all of the nonhuman materialities that remain within the house in their absence. These things—animals, lights, shadows, winds—assert themselves on the center stage of “Time Passes” from their traditionally subordinate places in the background of narratives as nonhuman materialities. The dominant presence of the nonhuman in “Time Passes” enables Woolf to experiment with representing the passage of time when humans are not there to witness it. *Between the Acts*, Woolf’s final novel, carries her vision further with its uncanny depiction of temporality throughout the entire narrative. Woolf focuses as much on the human experience of the passage of time as on much longer, geological, nonhuman temporalities: temporalities that flow parallel to human temporalities and yet ultimately outlast them. She warps time in the novel through the village pageant at Pointz Hall, which condenses the span of English history into a few hours. The pageant, in juxtaposition with her depictions of the nonhuman, highlights the inherent ephemerality of human temporalities. *To the Lighthouse* and *Between the Acts* not only strikingly depict Woolf’s vision of nonhuman agency, but these novels also refute a singular
experience of temporality. Woolf instead portrays a multiplicity of temporalities, including a deep geological temporality, to present a more complete vision of human and nonhuman being.

For the past few decades, critics have recognized the value of an ecocritical approach to Woolf’s works. Charlotte Zoë Walker states, “With the emergence of ecocritical approaches to literature, readers of Woolf are becoming increasingly conscious of the remarkable and varied representations of nature in many of her novels” (144). Louise Westling also observes that To the Lighthouse specifically displays Woolf’s “long concern with the nonhuman world” (“Flesh” 858). Westling argues that in her novels, Woolf “increasingly placed human ambitions and systems of meaning against the backdrop of enormous geological forces and vast reaches of time” (“Flesh” 856). Her attempts to represent the nonhuman in her novels highlight how humanity is “tiny” compared to geological temporal structures, structures in which we are mere “momentary presences” (“Flesh” 856). Walker also argues that Woolf has an “expansive view of time” that can be found throughout her works (147). L. Elizabeth Waller explains that Woolf’s writing was shaped by her understanding of the interconnectedness of the human and nonhuman worlds, which prompted her “to revision history as both (geo-) and (bio-)graphies” (137–138). In this way, Waller argues, Woolf aims to represent the “real world” as she sees it: an inseparable mix of the human and nonhuman where the nonhuman ceases to simply be a backdrop for the human world (138, 141). Clearly, Woolf’s attentiveness to the natural world has been well-documented and studied. However, I believe that approaching Woolf’s works from the perspectives of new materialism and object-oriented ontology will further elucidate the relationship between her depiction of the nonhuman and the passage of time, which are often central to her works.
While Woolf is also known for her depictions of the moment in her works, she also devotes considerable care to representing the vastness of time. Woolf’s vision of a multiplicity of temporalities, rather than accepting a singular understanding of time propagated by global standardized time, allows her in *To the Lighthouse* and *Between the Acts* to render what Greg Garrard, Timothy Morton, and Jane Bennett would consider a “long-view of time” on expansive geological scales. In his article, “Worlds Without Us: Some Types of Disanthropy,” Greg Garrard specifically identifies the temporality of *To the Lighthouse* as a representation of “deep time,” but I argue that deep time can be found in *Between the Acts* as well. Deep time, he explains, recognizes the larger geological temporalities of nonhuman materialities that began far before and will exist far after the lifespan of human beings. By acknowledging deep time and the materialities that exist within its temporal flow, humans can begin to partially comprehend how the Earth changes and flows through a temporality we cannot experience. Garrard further characterizes the deep time Woolf portrays in *To the Lighthouse* as a kind of synecdoche: “the hare calmly sitting up, the room swept by the impassive lighthouse and the pantry repossessed by a thistle stand in for ecological and geological timescales that defy human imagination” (43).

The nonhuman materialities that inhabit the Ramsay house represent the slow passage of deep time as Woolf vastly expands her temporal frame from the events of a single day to the passage of ten years. She makes a similar literary gesture in *Between the Acts* as she expands the scope of her narrative of a day to include what read almost as geological memories of the land surrounding Pointz Hall before as well as throughout the ages of humanity.

In *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*, Timothy Morton evokes a disruption of our notions of temporality as human beings through his conception of hyperobjects. His theories about how the variability of the experience of time among the human
and nonhuman are in line with how Woolf portrays human and nonhuman temporality in *To the Lighthouse* and *Between the Acts*. Morton proposes an understanding of the passage of time that is inclusive of nonhuman materialities, which exist within expansive temporalities unknowable to humans. Hyperobjects exist in temporalities that are unconstrained by the bounds of human-made temporal structures and conceptions of time. This incomprehensible nature of hyperobjects often renders them invisible to humans who cannot conceive of wider frames of temporality (1). Due to the existence of hyperobjects, in Morton’s opinion, time and space can no longer be understood as absolutes (56).

According to Morton’s reading of the history of the twentieth century, a new geological era called the Anthropocene began to emerge as human activity increasingly altered the surface of the Earth. He identifies several “prequels” to the beginning of the Anthropocene in 1945 due to the development of the atomic bomb, including the birth of Einstein’s theory of relativity, phenomenology, and quantum theory. It was only after 1900, according to Morton, that time and space ceased to be thought of “as effects of objects, rather than absolute containers” (65). These “prequels” shaped the way the human and the nonhuman were perceived, and the artistic and literary movements of the early twentieth century can be contextualized as reactions to these “prequels” of the Anthropocene (10-11). In this way, the literature of modernist writers is directly tied to a period of increasing ecological change, as well as tremendous temporal change with the standardization of time. It is not unlikely that Woolf recognized these changes occurring to the Earth’s surface and human understanding of the Earth’s temporality as she wrote between the two world wars.

Jane Bennett in *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* also discusses temporality in the context of her theory of the vital materiality of matter. Bennett explains that *thing-power*
acknowledges the agency of the ostensibly passive object. *Thing-power* recognizes the materiality and efficacy of nonhuman materialities in its acknowledgment of “the strange ability of ordinary . . . items to exceed their status as objects and manifest traces of independence or aliveness” (xvi). Bennett believes her concept of *thing-power* will “enhance receptivity to the impersonal life that surrounds and infuses us” (4). Her hopes for the potential benefits of acknowledging *thing-power* strikingly parallel what I believe Woolf aimed to accomplish by shifting her narrative focus to the nonhuman in the “Time Passes” section of *To the Lighthouse* as well as in *Between the Acts*. Bennett also believes that a shift in our understanding of temporality is necessary to truly recognize the agency of the nonhuman. She suggests that widening our conceptions of temporality, or adopting a “long view of time,” may allow us to more readily recognize *thing-power* and the vital materiality of objects (10–11).

*To the Lighthouse* and *Between the Acts* both engage in representing this “long view of time,” or recognition of deep time, for which Garrard, Morton, and Bennett all advocate. Just as they suggest, it is through recognizing the multiplicity of temporalities that Woolf portrays in these novels that we can begin to acknowledge how she renders the nonhuman in her works with such vitality and agency. By envisioning wider frames of temporality like those Woolf constructs in *To the Lighthouse* and *Between the Acts*, we can not only recognize the vitality and agency of the nonhuman materialities she focuses on in her works, but also realize how the nonhuman exists and endures through time differently than we as human beings do. Beginning with *To the Lighthouse*, I will explore how Woolf clearly portrays an ecological temporality of things and the vitality of matter by delving into a world without humans in “Time Passes.” I will then analyze how Woolf is able to subsequently further her vision through her representation of nonhuman temporality and agency alongside the human throughout her final novel, *Between the Acts*. 
To the Lighthouse

The short “Time Passes” section of To the Lighthouse is remarkable for its absence of humans and how the deaths of Mrs. Ramsay, Prue, and Andrew are confined to a few sentences within brackets that seem anecdotal to the rest of the text. Garrard asserts that modernist authors began to experiment with imagining “a world completely and finally without people” (40–41). To the Lighthouse explicitly explores this kind of world in the “Time Passes” section. David Sherman argues Woolf’s stylistic choice to place the deaths of Mrs. Ramsay, Prue, and Andrew within brackets simultaneously represents and distances their deaths in the narrative “so that we are both present and absent at them” (175). Their deaths further advances Woolf’s agenda to decenter the human subject in favor of the nonhuman other by representing the deaths of her characters in as minimalistic and tangential of a way as possible. Garrard further explains that “Time Passes” “is unprecedented in placing the house at the disposal of deep time and its slow, inexorably invasive biological powers” (41). Yet, Woolf clearly represents more than just the “biological” in her treatment of the nonhuman in “Time Passes.”

The focus of “Time Passes” moves away from the Ramsays in their absence and strikingly moves instead to the nonhuman. Jane Duran argues that Woolf’s greatest achievement in her rendering of time in “Time Passes” is not how she overcomes the “printerly conventions” of the early twentieth century, but in her “sheer articulation of time as a force in and of itself” (306). Woolf was able to accomplish this feat by removing her human characters from the text to more readily allow the vitality of nonhuman materialities, including the force of time, to rise to the surface of her narrative. According to Westling, “Time Passes” is a transitional section in To the Lighthouse not only in the context of the novel but also in the wider context of history, as it transports the narrative from the end of the Victorian era to the modern era after World War I.
This view of “Time Passes” reflects Woolf’s own view of the structure of *To the Lighthouse* as “two blocks joined by a corridor,” and she also considered “Time Passes” to be an “interesting experiment” (Raitt qtd. in Duran 305).

By writing this “interesting experiment,” Woolf is able to categorically represent the agency of the nonhuman by almost solely focusing “Time Passes” on the nonhuman in the Ramsays’ absence. In “Time Passes,” Westling observes that “the vast forces of the nonhuman world flow over and erase all the intricate structures of the human community” (“Flesh” 860). She further argues that Woolf portrays the “energies” of the materialities left behind in the Ramsay house in the “Time Passes” section, which “plunges her narrative into the very energies flowing through the sea of being . . . in which people are no more consequential than brief flashes of light” (“Flesh” 862). Woolf certainly describes the materialities that remain in the Ramsays’ abandoned house in this way described by Westling, but her attentiveness to the nonhuman moves beyond an ecological conception of being as a “sea” of “energies.” According to theories of object-oriented ontology, like those posited by Ian Bogost, materialities are withdrawn and individual in their nature, rather than coexisting in a “sea of being” described by Westling. Bogost argues that the nature of nonhuman being is impossible to perceive, even when the nonhuman offers “clues” to its experience of the world, because any experience of the world that is not a human one is inherently withdrawn from our understanding (63).

Woolf represents this paradox of the nonhuman in “Time Passes” through her narration. While she clearly depicts both the organic life that has moved into the Ramsay house and the inorganic objects that were left behind as vibrantly material, the narrator continues to emphasize that the house is “empty” and “deserted,” thus representing the narrator’s—and essentially humanity’s—inaibility to perceive the being of nonhuman materialities. Sherman explains that
the narration of “Time Passes” structures its temporality through its use of a form of “narrative insomnia” that supersedes the limits of temporality—past, present, and future—by existing in none of those times. He notes that the narration “warps time, creating subjectivity that voices itself not-in-the-present-tense, non-synchronously, as time passing or even surpassing the subject” (169). Sherman further identifies the narrator of “Time Passes” as a means of bridging the gap between the subjective, or traditionally human, and the other, the nonhuman. The narrator, according to Sherman, is able to show “the difference of others without subsuming them as the same” (161). In this way, Woolf breaks from the long philosophical tradition of viewing the human self as exclusively subjects and relegating all other materialities as objects to redefine being in her more inclusive turn towards the nonhuman. Her narration, which defies a fixed temporality, aligns with Morton’s understanding of the temporality of hyperobjects. The narrator depicts the nonhuman in the Ramsay house across a compressed expanse of time that would otherwise be impossible for humans to observe. Woolf recognizes our limitations as humans in fully understanding the passage of time, and by entering into the deep temporality of the hyperobject, she attempts to represent the nonhuman in To the Lighthouse as it is otherwise almost impossible to imagine across time.

Bennett’s concept of “thing-power” offers a way to recognize the agency and materiality of nonhuman objects—even if we cannot truly know “what it’s like to be a thing” as Bogost’s title suggests—and to interpret Woolf’s depictions of vital materialities in the strikingly strange “Time Passes” section. She believes her concept of thing-power will “enhance receptivity to the impersonal life that surrounds and infuses us” (4). Bennett’s hopes for the potential benefits of acknowledging thing-power parallel what I believe Woolf aims to accomplish by shifting the narrative focus to the nonhuman in “Time Passes.” Woolf’s representation of the passage of time
as experienced by what remains in and what enters into the Ramsays’ summer home expands the temporal frame of the novel in “Time Passes” to depict a long view of time. The agency and thing-power of the nonhuman shines through in Woolf’s compressed rendering of the passage of time in “Time Passes,” and she expresses the experience of this long view of time when she writes, “for night and day, month and year ran shapelessly together” (TtL 156). In “Time Passes,” human structures of temporality fall away as Woolf removes her human characters from the forefront of the narrative. It is in this absence of humans that Woolf can depict the flow of time as it affects the nonhuman materialities that remain in the Ramsay home.

Throughout “Time Passes,” Woolf juxtaposes the human conception of the Ramsay house as “empty” with descriptions of how many materialities actually remain and thrive within the house that is merely empty of humans. The number of objects the winds encounter in the house—like “bare boards,” “hangings that flapped,” “wood that creaked,” “the bare legs of tables,” “saucepans and china,” “a pair of shoes,” “a shooting cap,” “some faded skirts and coats in the wardrobes”—make the house seem full rather than “empty.” Woolf continues to describe how even light and shadows inhabit the “empty” house now as well: “Now, day after day, light turned like a flower reflected in water, its clear image on the wall opposite. Only the shadows of the trees, flourishing in the wind, made obeisance on the wall . . . or birds, flying, made a soft spot flutter slowly across the bedroom floor” (TtL 149). In this very scene, Woolf embodies Bennett’s mission of “highlighting” the nonhuman materialities “cast in the shadow” by demonstrating the vitality of the very shadows that inhabit the Ramsay house (ix). Her depictions of air, light, and shadow among other materialities also represent what Sherman identifies as “the narrator’s empty placeholders for focalized subjects” (169). However, I believe it is clear through Woolf’s writing that the nonhuman materialities of the Ramsay house are anything but
“empty placeholders,” as they are the primary focus of the narrative in the absence of humans in “Time Passes.” In fact, she directly undercuts this notion of the material as “empty placeholders” in her deeply ironic descriptions of the Ramsay house as “empty” when it is in reality brimming with materiality.

Early in “Time Passes,” Woolf describes the ocean winds as they make their way through the “empty” Ramsay house and interact with the things they encounter. As the winds move through the house, they ask questions of the objects they encounter in a powerful display of their vitality and agency. She writes,

Almost one might imagine them, as they entered the drawing-room, questioning and wondering, toying with the flap of hanging wallpaper, asking, would it hang much longer, when would it fall? Then smoothly brushing the walls, they passed on musingly as if asking the red and yellow roses on the wall-paper whether they would fade, and questioning (gently, for there was time at their disposal) the torn letters in the wastepaper basket, the flowers, the books, all of which were now open to them and asking: Were they allies? Were they enemies? How long would they endure? (TtL 146)

According to Sherman, the questioning of the wind in “Time Passes” also reflects Woolf’s reversal of subjectivity. He also notes that in general, subjectivity is declarative in its being, and “Time Passes” conversely presents the interrogative nature of the wind as a sign of Woolf’s recognition of the nonhuman other, including nonhuman temporalities (172). This interrogative nature of the nonhuman materialities in “Time Passes” specifically applies to questions of temporality in how the winds question the duration of the existence of the materialities they encounter. The winds recognize that time is “at their disposal” as they investigate the Ramsay
house in a display of their nonhuman otherness that places them outside of the temporality of the Ramsays, as the section will reveal that the times of Mrs. Ramsay, Prue, and Andrew have ended. The thing-power of the winds and all they encounter is evident in their endurance beyond the timeframes of the human inhabitants of the house, and in their absence, Woolf can illuminate their vibrant materiality and their existence in an expansive temporality in a house that is clearly not empty at all.

Woolf taps into questions of temporality and ontology to upset anthropocentric conceptions of both time and being with her depiction of the ocean winds as well. The winds wonder about the nature of the things they encounter and question how long these things will continue to exist. Bogost devotes a chapter of *Alien Phenomenology* to a material understanding of wonder. He describes the “act of wonder” as a practice that “invites a detachment from ordinary logics, of which human logics are but one example” (124). He then suggests that “wonder is a way objects orient,” and this idea of orienting is clearly what the winds are doing as they move throughout the abandoned house inspecting all of the materialities with which they come into contact (124). Woolf also ties this act of wonder to temporality, as the winds question “how long would they endure?” The winds’ wondering of temporality suggests an uncertainty on the winds’ part of how long other materialities will continue to be, further highlighting the heterogeneous nature of the passage of time. The winds, as a force of nature, are perhaps timeless in their existence, but they recognize that other materialities do not experience the passage of time as so eternal. Woolf also engages in what Bogost has identified as an ontographical practice of making lists in a similar way that Joyce did in “Wandering Rocks.” Through the questioning of the winds, Woolf is able to list a variety of materialities with which
the winds come into contact, thus drawing attention to their very materiality by simply rendering their existence in the narrative.

While Duran acknowledges that the ocean winds are the “main actors” of “Time Passes,” she undermines the agency and dominant presence of the winds in this section with the caveat, “if they may so be called [actors].” She goes on to emphasize that the winds move throughout the section “not, obviously, due to agency,” while conceding to at least the presence of “animal agency,” specifically of the toads now living in the Ramsay house. Duran concludes that Woolf’s representation of the winds and what she considers to be agency only affected by animals is meant to show the reader how the passage of time makes us “all victims of that least-agenting of apparent processes” (305). I take issue with Duran’s dismissal of nonhuman agency and her weak concession of the agency of animals. Woolf undeniably means to show the agency of all things in “Time Passes.” The passage of time is also not the “least-agenting of apparent processes” for the nonhuman because it is the nonhuman that clearly displays its enduring agency as time passes without humans living in the Ramsay house. However, I do agree with one aspect of her claim: humans are clearly the “victims” of the passage of time in To the Lighthouse, as evidenced by the breakdown of the relationships of her human characters in the subsequent section, “The Lighthouse,” after the deaths of Mrs. Ramsay, Prue, and Andrew.

Mrs. McNab, the caretaker charged with readying the Ramsay summer home for human occupants after ten years have passed, thinks to herself when she arrives at the house to clean, “There it had stood all these years without a soul in it” (TtL 157). Woolf characterizes her arrival to come and clean the house as destructive, and Mrs. McNab seems to disturb the world created by the nonhuman inhabitants of the house for the past ten years when she is described as “tearing the veil of silence” (TtL 150). Walker notes that one of Woolf’s most “compelling” engagements
with the nonhuman is her coupling of silence with nature in her works, in which “silence mediates between the self and nature” (145). She argues that in this way, “Time Passes” is “a symbolic silence made of words . . . depicting both the passage of time and the impersonal power of nature to absorb human tragedies of loss and death” (145–146). Silence in “Time Passes,” according to Walker, does not merely signify the absence of the Ramsays in their summer home (146). The silence of the Ramsay house is filled with materialities that may not make enough noise to break the silence descended upon the house in their absence, but Woolf portrays them as vibrant and agential in the absence of humans.

Woolf redefines our understanding of silence through her narration that demonstrates how the silence of the Ramsay house is filled with materialities as opposed to simply an audible representation of the absence of humans. Yet, through her depictions of the vitality of the materialities inside of the house, Woolf has constructed a narrative in “Time Passes” that repeatedly expresses the anthropocentric understanding of the house as empty of any life in the Ramsays’ absence only to flip the narrative perspective to argue precisely the opposite:

The house was deserted. . . . The saucepan had rusted and the mat decayed. Toads had nosed their way in. Idly, aimlessly, the swaying shawl swung to and fro. A thistle thrust itself between the tiles in the larder. The swallows nested in the drawing-room; the floor was strewn with straw; the plaster fell in shovelfuls; rafters were laid bare; rats carried off this and that to gnaw behind the wainscots. Tortoise-shell butterflies burst from the chrysalis and pattered their life out on the window-pane. (TiL 159)

Woolf’s juxtaposition of anthropocentrism with her vision of materiality is powerfully rendered in this passage. It is through the contrasting view of the house as “empty” and the materialities
that fill the house that Woolf advocates for a decentering of the human in favor of recognizing
the vitality of matter. The materialities in the house are portrayed as active things that use their
thing-power to change the environment of the Ramsay house and reclaim the human space for
the nonhuman. After all, there would be no need for Mrs. McNab to ready the house for human
habitation after ten years if nonhuman materialities had no thing-power and ability of their own
to alter the state of the abandoned Ramsay summer home.

This passage also continues to show Woolf’s simultaneous compression and expansion of
the passage of time. The narrative of To the Lighthouse compresses and expands from the events
of a single day in “The Window” to the passage of ten years in “Times Passes” and then
refocuses the narrative to the events of a another day in “The Lighthouse.” Ironically, “Time
Passes” is the shortest section of the novel. “The Window” and “The Lighthouse” each span 179
and 95 pages respectively, while “Time Passes” is merely 28 pages long in its original
pagination\(^2\) even though it encapsulates a much wider period of time than the other two sections.
On the level of the printed book itself, Woolf’s compression and expansion of time is quite
literal. While depicting the passage of ten years in the abandoned Ramsay house, Woolf zooms
in periodically to describe moments of materiality that occur throughout those ten years. Even
within these moments, like her description of various material inhabitants of the abandoned
Ramsay home noted above, she compresses and expands temporal flow. For example, the
tortoise-shell butterflies “burst from the chrysalis and pattered their life out on the window-
pane,” essentially being born, living, and dying within the span of a single sentence. Woolf’s
expanded narrative time and consequently extemporal narrator (“extemporal” in the sense of
existing outside of a fixed temporality) in “Time Passes” allows her to render a multiplicity of

---

temporalities by depicting how the passage of time does not flow at a uniform rate for all materialities, even at the sentence-level construction of her narrative.

Much in the same way, Woolf expresses the deaths of Mrs. Ramsay, Prue, and Andrew in single sentences that diminish their significance and weight as the human subjects of “The Window” through the compression of the ending of their lives. The mention of Mrs. Ramsay’s death, and the deaths of her children placed within brackets in the text of “Time Passes” is all Woolf comments on the deaths of members of the Ramsay family: “[Mr. Ramsay stumbling along a passage stretched his arms out one dark morning, but, Mrs. Ramsay having died rather suddenly the night before, he stretched his arms out. They remained empty.]” (TtL 149). The deaths of her characters portrayed in this way powerfully render Westling’s notion of humanity as “no more consequential than brief flashes of light” (“Flesh” 862). As previously noted, Woolf continues to use the word “empty” to describe the abandoned Ramsay summer home—in fact, she does so as quickly as the next sentence in the narrative. Woolf thereafter shifts the meaning of “empty” in “Time Passes” in order to point to the distinctions she is drawing on ontological and temporal levels. The Ramsay house, which is considered “empty” from a human perspective, is not empty but rather full of nonhuman materialities that display their vitality in their continued existence in their own temporalities. Mr. Ramsay’s arms, however, will remain truly empty in the absence of his wife, whose time has ended.

Woolf also includes expansive visions of the passage of time in “Time Passes” in addition to her focus on the materiality of the moment. In one example, the narrator muses on a possible future for the abandoned Ramsay home as it continues to decay in the absence of humans to maintain the structure. The narrator imagines how the house will continue to fade away until it is unrecognizable, although the skeleton of the house would still endure after the
house fades into “the depths of darkness” at the end of its existence: “In the ruined room, picnickers would have lit their kettles; lovers sought shelter there, lying on the bare boards” (*TtL* 160). The narrator continues to describe the house’s decay to the point that nature has completely reclaimed the space once occupied by the house. Yet, even though the Ramsays all probably died long before the house ceased to be, the materiality of the house continues to linger. The narrator describes how “some trespasser, losing his way, could have told only by a red-hot poker among the nettles, or a scrap of china in the hemlock, that here once someone had lived; there had been a house” (*TtL* 161). In this vision of a disanthropic future, Woolf undercuts human temporality in a display of the endurance of the material Ramsay house even when it can no longer be recognized as a human home. The Ramsay house is a hyperobject, as it is beyond the comprehension of Woolf’s human characters to imagine the entirety of its existence. Through her narrative imagination, we can begin to perceive of its nonhuman existence through time.

Mrs. McNab is later described when she comes into the house a subsequent time as breaking into the house as well as “lurch[ing] about” as if she is destroying the environment of the empty house (*TtL* 154). Her presence destroys what Garrard calls the “peculiar beauty in the disanthropic moment” (41). Yet, despite her efforts to clean the Ramsay house, the narrator questions Mrs. McNab’s vision of the house as a human space in such a way that further evokes questions of temporality: “What power could now prevent the fertility, the insensibility of nature? Mrs McNab’s dream of a lady, of a child, of a plate of milk soup? It had wavered over the walls like a spot of sunlight and vanished” (*TtL* 160). The narrator acknowledges the agency of the nonhuman to thrive in the absence of humans and suggests that the nonhuman has irreversibly taken over this human space, even if nonhuman existence and agency is “insensible” from a human perspective.
The narrator further suggests that Mrs. McNab’s vision of the house as a human space for the Ramsay family is but a fleeting “dream” that fades away in the inevitable flow of time. Woolf in this instance highlights the ephemeral nature of all human life, as it is registered merely as a flash of sunlight against the wall in a nonhuman world. When Mrs. McNab hears that the Ramsays may return to the summer home after all of these years, she and Mrs. Bast work dutifully to undo “the corruption and rot” that had settled upon the house in the Ramsays’ absence (TtL 161). In reality, “the corruption and rot” is not “oblivion” as Mrs. McNab and Mrs. Bast see it, but rather is evidence of the vibrancy of matter and the thing-power of nonhuman materialities that Woolf powerfully illustrates in the absence of humans. Nonetheless, in a thrust of anthropocentrism, the cleaning crew tames and culls the nonhuman materialities in order to ready the house for the Ramsays to return as the dominant agents of the household once more.

By cleaning the Ramsay home, Mrs. McNab and Mrs. Bast believe they have “rescued” the human space “from the pool of Time” that has spanned since the Ramsays last occupied the home, which points again to a human misunderstanding of nonhuman temporality (TtL 161). Time in To the Lighthouse is viewed as destructive by humans as they experience loss and witness how the Ramsay house changes when they are no longer there. Mrs. McNab and Mrs. Bast believe they have effectively ended the time of the nonhuman materialities that have taken over the Ramsay home through their cleaning. However, despite the efforts of the cleaning, an “intermittent music” can just barely be heard in the house after it has been cleaned and readied for human habitation once more: “the hum of an insect, the tremor of cut grass, dissevered yet somehow belonging; the jar of a dor beetle, the squeak of a wheel, loud, low, but mysteriously related” (TtL 164). The temporality of things has not ended in the Ramsay house just because humans have returned to live there again. Woolf ultimately concludes her depiction of the
disanthropic, nonhuman world in “Time Passes” by asserting that the thing-power of the ostensibly conquered nonhuman world remains even in the presence of humans. Woolf even hints at how the nonhuman materialities of the house are, as Bennett considers all materialities, a “complicated web of dissonant connections between bodies” in her description of the materialities of the Ramsay house as “mysteriously related” (4).

Although the remaining Ramsays as well as Lily Briscoe and Carmichael return to the house ten years later, Garrard concludes that “Time Passes” is one of the first instances in literature where we can view “the world as it is when we are not looking” (42). It is in this view of the Ramsay house that has been removed of its human layer in “Time Passes” that Woolf is able to demonstrate the disparity between human and nonhuman temporalities as well as the vitality of nonhuman things. To Woolf, the flow of time is not as homogeneous as human-made structures of time—like global standardized time—conceive it to be. The nonhuman in “Time Passes” experiences the flow of temporality at different paces than her human characters, as depicted in Woolf’s display of nonhuman endurance and vitality after the deaths of several of her characters. As evidenced by the lingering “intermittent music” that fills the Ramsay house even after “the cleaning and the scrubbing and the scything and the mowing had drowned it,” Woolf envisions that the ecological temporality of things extends beyond human conception and understanding (TtL 164). The things that Mrs. McNab and Mrs. Bast have “cleaned” continue to endure despite the cleaning crew’s anthropocentric belief that they have successfully ended the presence of unwanted things in the Ramsay house. The house has not “gone to rack and ruin” as Mrs. McNab believes it has at all (TtL 160). It is perhaps even more vibrant in the absence of humanity. Woolf actively deconstructs the human dismissal of the house as empty in a way that challenges our notions of what constitutes being, the self, and life, as well as what has value and
agency among the nonhuman and the human. In this way, “Time Passes” presents Woolf’s vision of a multiplicity of temporalities and of the world as an interconnected mesh of human and nonhuman materialities.

*Between the Acts*

Woolf wrote *Between the Acts* in the shadow of World War II, as the destruction of the English landscape by Nazi war planes had already begun (“Flesh” 865). Several critics have addressed Woolf’s representation of time on larger scales than the span of human history, yet they fall short of expressing precisely how these geological histories in juxtaposition with human histories portray temporality as heterogeneous and tied to the material. According to Westling, the village pageant produced by Miss La Trobe at Pointz Hall portrays a “radically democratized and feminized view of English history,” and the novel as a whole includes representations of “the landscape’s embodiment of history from the era of the dinosaur through the Romans and up to the present, and the sustaining natural rhythms of the land and its creatures which outlast all human effort” (“Flesh” 865). Westling also writes that *Between the Acts* “boldly insists upon the interrelation of human language and art with the voices of other creatures” (“Literature” 40). The novel portrays “the intimate processes of growth and decay around us as well as the huge sweep of geological history . . . and the weathers and rhythms that pulsate through the ages as through our individual moments and days” (“Literature” 40). Harriet Blodgett also writes that Woolf’s inclusion of the natural and nonhuman world in *Between the Acts* “is a reassuring reminder that we are part of an enduring context” (29). Carol Cantrell notes how Woolf details “human history, geological process, the ongoing present life of the biosphere” as parts of everyday life and experience in *Between the Acts* (34).
Woolf has clearly expanded the scope of her representation of temporality from *To the Lighthouse* to *Between the Acts* to include visions of the passage of time that predate human history. In this way, she subverts anthropocentric conceptions of history by forcing her readers to confront the vastness of time and the relative ephemerality of humanity throughout geological history, just as Miss La Trobe attempts to force her audience to consider themselves in the present moment as a part of the history of England in her pageant. These sweeping images of the deep temporality of materialities and hyperobjects decenter the human from her narrative, and even from history itself, in her attentiveness to materiality. In *Between the Acts*, Woolf similarly compresses and expands time as she did in *To the Lighthouse* as she details the rich materiality of the moment in everyday life alongside her sweeping imagery of geological histories. Woolf’s equally expansive and inclusive visions of history as well as the present moment highlight what Bennett considers to be the agency of nonhuman materialities. The nonhuman present in *Between the Acts* is depicted by Woolf as having the agency to not only influence history, but also our everyday lives. As Woolf writes, the nonhuman and the material take their “part” in the staging of the pageant at Pointz Hall as much as they have existed and taken its part in shaping the geological history of the Earth (*BtA* 181).

In *Between the Acts*, Woolf describes and reframes the land around Pointz Hall, and even Europe itself, into a geological timeframe to highlight how the land predates human history and will outlive humanity. Her descriptions of land in *Between the Acts* align with Morton’s description of hyperobjects, as the land can be considered a hyperobject due to the inconceivable vastness of land itself and its expansive disruption across time. From the beginning of the novel, the land on which the pageant will be performed, the garden and lawn of Pointz Hall, is saturated with the richness of English history that it has witnessed, and Westling comments that time itself
is “embodied” in the land (“Flesh” 866). Woolf elevates her narrative to a vision of deep time in a single sentence when she describes an aerial view of the location for a nearby cesspool, “From an aeroplane . . . you could still see, plainly marked, the scars made by the Britons; by the Romans; by the Elizabethan manor house; and by the plough, when they ploughed the hill to grow wheat in the Napoleonic wars” (BtA 4). The land has endured through the various peoples and empires that have shaped it for their own use, and the land is what remains after the various chapters of English history tied to that land have drawn to a close. Woolf’s depiction of the land across time draws attention to its longevity of existence and simultaneously exposes the relative brevity of human existence in comparison with geological temporalities. It is impossible to conceive of all that the land has experienced, despite Woolf’s sweeping efforts. The land surrounding Pointz Hall can only begin to be understood in the context of the hyperobject.

The lily pool at Pointz Hall is also described in the temporal framework of geological deep time: “There had always been lilies there, self-sown from wind-dropped seed . . . Water, for hundreds of years, had silted down into the hollow, and lay there four or five feet deep over a black cushion of mud” (BtA 43). Woolf emphasizes the agency of lily plants and the wind to scatter seeds while noting the longevity of the lilies themselves, perhaps suggesting that they have been residents of the land surrounding Pointz Hall longer than humans have lived there. She further describes the water and the mud as being hundreds of years old, which places the water and the mud in addition to the lily pond as a whole ecosystem beyond the bounds of human temporality. The lily pool can also be considered a hyperobject—having existed long before humans and escaping total understanding in its existence in a geological temporality. The subsequent story of the lady who drowned herself in the lily pool and whose body was never found further separates human and geological conceptions of time (BtA 43–44). The lost body of
the lady who drowned herself in the lily pool has been absorbed by the ecosystem of the lily pool, acting as a source of nutrients and life in its decomposition. Although her life has ended, Woolf demonstrates through the lady’s death how human temporalities, and all of human history, seem fleeting and ephemeral relative to geological temporalities.

*Between the Acts* from its very title suggests that time will be compressed and expanded throughout the course of actions both on and off the stage, much as “Time Passes” suggests the same in *To the Lighthouse*. In one example early in the novel, Lucy Swithin compresses and expands time as she is reading *Outline of History* and reflecting upon the history of England:

> She had spent the hours between three and five thinking of rhododendron forests in Piccadilly; when the entire continent, not then, she understood, divided by a channel, was all one; populated, she understood, by elephant-bodied, seal-necked, heaving, surging, slowly writhing, and, she supposed, barking monsters; the iguanodon, the mammoth, and the mastodon; from whom presumably, she thought . . . we descend. (*BtA* 8–9)

Woolf demonstrates in this passage Lucy’s attempt to conceive of a deep geological temporality that predates human history. Lucy spends her time trying to conceive the inconceivable: the entire history of England. The title of her book even suggests that this is not possible, since it is merely an “outline” of history after all. Lucy is extremely focused on trying to understand what England was like before humans, as Woolf notes her efforts to understand the land when it was not “divided” by the English Channel and inhabited by mammals that no longer exist in the modern era. The “monsters” Lucy pictures in her mind that used to populate a primeval Europe make that world seem savage and frightening. However, it is clear that England before humans is
a difficult concept for her to grasp, as she spends hours reading her book trying to picture what kind of things existed on even the very land of her familiar family home.

The inconceivable history of the land which Lucy is trying to grasp seems to linger in her consciousness as she struggles to pull herself out of a deep geological temporality and back into the present. Lucy is so deeply engrossed in her reading that it takes her mind a substantial amount of time to switch from thinking about the past to existing in the present. Woolf directly acknowledges the disparity between “actual time” and “mind time” through the course of Lucy’s thoughts: “It took her five seconds in actual time, in mind time ever so much longer, to separate Grace . . . from the leather-covered grunting monster who was about, as the door opened, to demolish a whole tree in the green streaming undergrowth of the primeval forest” (BtA 9). Woolf’s distinction here between “actual time”—which perhaps equates to standardized time—and “mind time” mirrors Kern’s conceptions of the tensions between public and private times. Woolf renders this tension in a rather disturbing image of prehistory blending into the present as Lucy switches her temporal frame of reference, suggesting that there are different flows and compositions of time that can occur or be experienced simultaneously.

The pageant produced by Miss La Trobe is staged on the lawn of Pointz Hall, a space Miss La Trobe deems to be “the very place for a pageant!” (BtA 76). Woolf further describes the layout of the land, which is indeed naturally suited for a performance: “The lawn was as flat as the floor of a theatre. The terrace, rising, made a natural stage. The trees barred the stage like pillars. And the human figure was seen to great advantage against a background of sky. As for the weather, it was . . . [a] perfect summer afternoon” (BtA 76). The space on the lawn designated to be the natural stage of the pageant turns out to be as integral to the performance as the actors and dialogue. Miss La Trobe’s pageant highlights the role of nature and the nonhuman
across human history through their roles within the pageant. The trees, bushes, breeze, and animals that appear throughout the acts all have such a commanding presence in the pageant that is difficult to overlook the extent to which Woolf draws attention to the nonhuman during the pageant. Westling notes that *Between the Acts* presents the human and nonhuman as equally important entities in the “human drama” of the novel, both in the pageant and in the human world. The nonhuman materialities Woolf depicts, like trees, the rain, swallows, cows, and butterflies are integral parts of the pageant’s delivery and performance (“Flesh” 865). The formation of the lawn lends itself to being used as a stage by Miss La Trobe for her pageant, and the trees on the lawn provide built-in scenery for the stage of the pageant, as well as a place for Miss La Trobe to conceal herself from the audience and process her (usually anguished) reactions to the progress of the pageant in private. The bushes additionally act as concealment for the actors and actresses to change in and out of their costumes unseen by the audience. In this sense, the nonhuman literally sets the stage for the pageant in its very materiality.

However, the nonhuman in *Between the Acts* is not always as facilitating as Miss La Trobe would like it to be. The breeze often interjects itself into the dialogue and the lyrics of the actors in the pageant and subsequently makes it difficult for the audience to try to glean meaning from the obscured and fragmented songs. This happens several times throughout the pageant, and the breeze’s interjections do not leave the message and meaning of the play unscathed. As “[t]he breeze blew gaps between their words,” the actors struggle to sing about ancient Rome and Greece loudly enough over the breeze despite Miss La Trobe’s angry cries for them to sing louder:

“They dig and delving we pass . . . and the Queen and the Watch Tower fall . . . for Agamemnon has ridden away . . . Clytemnestra is nothing but . . .
The words died away. Only a few great names—Babylon, Nineveh, Clytemnestra, Agamemnon, Troy—floated across the open space. Then the wind rose, and in the rustle of the leaves even the great words became inaudible; and the audience sat staring at the villagers, whose mouths opened, but no sound came. \(BtA\) 139–140, ellipses in original)

The breeze’s interjection eventually renders the song impossible to hear or understand. In a way, it seems that the breeze and the rustling leaves assert themselves into this song about human history to represent the role of the nonhuman in history as well. Woolf describes the nonhuman voice in this pageant to undermine an anthropocentric view of history perpetuated by such songs that only detail humans and their actions. Her view of history as well as time itself is not confined to only a human history or a human experience of the passage of time. By representing the nonhuman in the pageant, Westling writes, “Woolf has carefully structured the novel to teach us to listen to the many voices and sounds like these, of other lives around us” (“Literature” 43). In Woolf’s view, these voices of the nonhuman deserve an equal space in a telling of history, as the voices of the nonhuman existed before and will endure beyond human beings.

Between one of the acts of Miss La Trobe’s pageant, Woolf describes a barn with the same literary technique that she used in the “Time Passes” section of \(To\ the\ Lighthouse\): the narrator in \(Between\ the\ Acts\) first expresses the human perspective of the barn as “empty” and then immediately subverts that description through a detailed listing of materiality inside the barn. She initially notes that the barn is over seven hundred years old, which immediately groups the barn among other materialities that Woolf renders as hyperobjects due to their existence through long periods of time like the lily pool and the rest of the land surrounding Pointz Hall. Even though the barn itself evokes images of “a Greek temple,” “the middle ages,” and for some
people even “an age before their own, the narrator ultimately concludes that the barn “was empty” at the end of the same sentence that is laden with these evocations of history (*BtA* 99). Woolf again lists the materialities present in the barn immediately after firmly stating that “The Barn was empty” in what Bogost would consider an ontographical list (*BtA* 100). To name a few of the materialities illuminated in Woolf’s vision of the barn, she describes how “Mice slid in and out of holes or stood upright, nibbling”; “Swallows were busy with straw in pockets of earth in the rafters”; “Countless beetles and insects of various sorts burrowed in the dry wood”; and “A butterfly sunned itself sensuously on a sunlit yellow plate” (*BtA* 100). She includes sensory details as well to represent the materialities inside of the barn: “Minute nibblings and rustlings broke the silence. Whiffs of sweetness and richness veined the air” (*BtA* 100). In her thorough detailing of the materialities inside the barn, it is hard to believe that Woolf considers it to be truly “empty” as her narrator claims it to be.

What advances this disanthropic glimpse into the materiality of the barn beyond what Woolf accomplished in “Time Passes” is that Woolf brings a human into the barn, Mrs. Sands, and shares her perspective on what she sees in the “empty” barn more explicitly than the thoughts of Mrs. McNab and Mrs. Bast were expressed. The materialities listed by Woolf are perceived very differently by Mrs. Sands than they are described by the narrator: “But butterflies she never saw; mice were only black pellets in kitchen drawers; moths she bundled in her hands and put out the window. . . . The Barn was empty” (*BtA* 100–101). Mrs. Sands represents a negative view of materiality—which is rather contrary to Woolf’s own vision of the nonhuman world as well as theories of new materialism and object-oriented ontology. In this instance in *Between the Acts*, Woolf’s sense of the barn as full of vibrant materialities juxtaposed with the view of the barn as “empty” from the perspective of the pageant audience clearly displays
materiality as it exists: literally between the acts of the pageant as well as between the thoughts and actions of humans where it is so often overlooked, misinterpreted, and disregarded.

Miss La Trobe’s pageant surveys English history, particularly highlighting the Elizabethan and Victorian eras, up to the present time in the last act. Yet Woolf displays how the nonhuman registers the passage of time throughout *Between the Acts* as well. Contrasted against the mishaps of the pageant, according to Westling, the “mute” nonhuman materialities are the only “certainties” portrayed in *Between the Acts* in their reliable “elemental rhythms like the primeval stability of returning seasons, the creative bubbling ooze of the cesspool or the mud in the lily pond, the return of the swallows each year from their southern migrations” (“Literature” 42). Swallows in particular are referenced throughout the text. What Westling is referring to is when Lucy muses about the migration of swallows to herself: “Across Africa, across France they had come to nest here. Year after year they came. Before there was a channel, when the earth, upon which the Windsor chair was planted, was a riot of rhododendrons . . . they had come” (*BtA* 108). In this example, Woolf undermines standardized time by providing an example of nonhuman temporality. Lucy recognizes that the swallows are able to discern the passage of time as they have been migrating to England for centuries, and this suggests that temporality can be measured and experienced in a multitude of ways by different materialities.

However, Woolf’s vision of nonhuman temporality is not so widely accepted in an anthropocentric world. Yoshiki Tajiri in his essay “Fiction, Reality and Prehistory: A Study of *Between the Acts*” interprets the nonhuman present in *Between the Acts* as an evocation of “prehistory” instead of attributing the Woolf’s attentiveness to the nonhuman as part of her efforts to highlight the vitality and agency of the nonhuman and a multiplicity of temporalities. To Tajiri, prehistory is a “virtually timeless world” in which only “inanimate nature or animals”
can experience time, not human beings (65). He identifies one example of Woolf’s supposed evocation of prehistory in an instance in which the wind and the rustle of the leaves obscure the words of the pageant and then a cow subsequently moos in a “primeval voice sounding loud in the ear of the present moment” (BtA 140, Tajiri 66). To Tajiri, these nonhuman materialities do not have any greater meaning in Between the Acts than representing a time before human beings. Yet a new materialist and an object-oriented ontological reading of this text shows that the nonhuman is integral not only to the pageant’s performance—as the mooing of the cow in this instance rescues the pageant from an embarrassing lull in action—but it is also inseparable from the novel as a whole. Tajiri further suggests that only humans are “keenly conscious” of the passage of time, and that in the “timelessness” of prehistory “there is no individuality” (67). However, Woolf’s mention of swallow migration and the natural rhythms of the nonhuman world undermine Tajiri’s assertion about temporality. Furthermore, by making this blanket statement about all of prehistory, Tajiri exposes his anthropocentrism through his erasure and conflation of any life and existence before written human history. Woolf clearly represents the nonhuman experience of the passage of time in Between the Acts by delving into descriptions of a deep geological temporality in addition to human conceptions of time. Arguments like Tajiri’s about materiality and temporality fall short of accounting for Woolf’s vision of the world as a variable mesh of temporal experience, humans, and nonhuman materialities.

Woolf perhaps most poignantly weaves together time, the human, and the nonhuman near the end of Miss La Trobe’s pageant. In the final act titled “The Present Time. Ourselves.,” Miss La Trobe had written in her script to “try ten mins. of present time. Swallows, cows, etc.” with the goal “to expose” the audience “with present-time reality” (BtA 179). Miss La Trobe’s vision of the pageant clearly accounts for the role of the nonhuman in a representation of the present
time and human history, as she has written the swallows and cows—who have already participated in the pageant before this point—directly into the script. She believes the audience will see the materiality of the lawn around them if they are forced to stare at a stage absent of actors for ten minutes. Unfortunately, the audience is confused by the lack of actors and actresses on the stage at the “beginning” of the final act, as—perhaps like readers encountering “Time Passes” for the first time—they are not accustomed to truly considering the nonhuman and the material. The audience’s lack of recognition of Miss La Trobe’s efforts to “expose” them to “present-time reality” greatly distresses her. She begins to think that her “illusion” has failed when a sudden rain shower begins to fall on the audience. The narrator describes the rain as it “poured like all the people in the world weeping. Tears. Tears. Tears.” Isa mutters to herself, “O that our human pain could here have ending!” as she looks up at the falling rain, which “trickled down her cheeks as if they were her own tears. But they were all people’s tears, weeping for all people” (BtA 180).

In this instance, Woolf imbues the rain with the weight of “human pain unending,” and the rain clouds burst at the precise moment when Miss La Trobe realizes that she is losing her audience as her “illusion” and her experiment begins to fail her (BtA 181). The bursting of the rain clouds in a sudden shower provides meaning for the audience struggling to comprehend what Miss La Trobe is trying to represent by forcing them to stare at their surroundings. It is worth noting that the rain shower may be interpreted by some as an instance of anthropomorphism, as the rain is understood by the audience, especially the distraught Isa, to embody all of human pain across history. However, I argue that the falling rain is perhaps anthropomorphized by the audience that is desperately trying to find the meaning in Miss La Trobe’s uncomfortable final act, but the rain is not viewed this way by Miss La Trobe. Miss La
Trobe is relieved by nature’s intervention: “‘That’s done it,’ sighed Miss La Trobe . . . Nature once more had taken her part. The risk she had run acting in the open air was justified” (BtA 180–181). She recognizes that nature has a role to play in her pageant, and she is grateful for its timely intervention. She does not assign any metaphorical significance for the rain, but she simply acknowledges that the nonhuman has come to her aid when she has failed to show the audience the materiality of their surroundings and how the nonhuman should be included in a rendering of history on her own.

By the time of Woolf’s death in 1941, the transitional implementation period of standardized time had also concluded as the thrust of modernization—and the inevitable passage of time itself—ultimately erased all structures of life as they were before the turn of the century. Yet, Between the Acts is a novel that is deeply concerned with the experience of the passage of time for both humans and nonhuman materialities, even after standardized time had become unequivocally adopted by the modern world as the uniform measure of the passage of time. Woolf does not abandon her concern for the declining legitimacy of an individual’s private conception of time and for the nonhuman materialities with which we share the Earth, as these concerns are at the core of even her final novel, published after her death. Between the Acts presents the passage of time as experienced by both the human and the nonhuman to show how the experience of temporality, whether it is a fleetingly human or a deeply geological, is variable in her vision of history in which both the human and nonhuman take their respective parts.

Woolf’s “Imaginations of the Strangest Kind”

A careful examination of To the Lighthouse and the subsequent and final Between the Acts reveals that there is a clear progression of Woolf’s vision of the materiality of existence as well as her perception of a multiplicity of temporalities throughout her works. The “Time
Passes” section of To the Lighthouse is easier to dismiss as a confusing aside due to its contained nature as the smaller one of three sections. A reader could feasibly skim through “Time Passes” and only linger to read the bracketed text that pertains to Woolf’s human characters that she established in “The Window.” “Time Passes” is disorienting and disturbing in its absence of humans and its detached rendering of the deaths of Mrs. Ramsay, Prue, and Andrew. Readers are left wanting their own answers to Lily Briscoe’s questioning of “What does it mean then, what can it all mean?” in the first sentence of the resumption of the human narrative in “The Lighthouse” in regards to the meaning of “Time Passes” (TtL 167). We understand that time does inevitably pass as “Time Passes” demonstrates, but as humans, we cannot fully understand how time passes for the nonhuman material world, despite Woolf’s best efforts to show us.

Yet, Woolf’s vision of materiality and temporality is completely interwoven throughout the text of Between the Acts, rendering it impossible to ignore the vitality of the nonhuman and the material as well as to continue to view the experience of the passage of time as uniform for all materialities. Between the Acts takes Woolf’s ambitious experiment in representation of “Time Passes” even further. Instead of writing a window into a world that is vibrantly material when we humans are not looking, Woolf writes the nonhuman into Between the Acts quite literally between the acts of Miss La Trobe’s pageant as well as between the acts of our everyday lives. The entire novel, rather than being most concentrated in one section, explicitly thematizes the materiality that exists between, alongside, before, and beyond human existence. One cannot dismiss the presence of the nonhuman and the multiplicity of temporalities that Woolf represents in Between the Acts. To ignore the material in the novel is to turn away from the mirror that Woolf has written to be held up and reflect the materiality of the world as it is. Despite humanity’s efforts to view the world from a long-held anthropocentric perspective and to adopt a
global standardized time with which to measure the passage of time in the modern era, Woolf demonstrates through her “imaginations of the strangest kind” that there is an agency and vitality to the nonhuman world, a world in which the passage of time is not uniformly experienced by all (TtL 152). She ultimately challenges us in the “Time Passes” section of *To the Lighthouse* and *Between the Acts* to expand our understanding of being and temporality so that the world may embrace the value of an ecological temporality of things.
Conclusion: Exploded-Views in the Age of the Anthropocene

In the beginning of *Hyperobjects*, Morton provocatively asserts “the end of the world has already occurred” because humans have forever changed the surface of the Earth, and this change brings us into the age of the Anthropocene (7). Morton explains that a distinctly “human layer” has been deposited on the Earth’s surface since the inventions of two technologies, and this “human layer” necessitates the naming of a new geological age. The steam engine began emitting carbon into the atmosphere to be spread about the globe in 1784, and the atomic bomb in 1945 brought about “the Great Acceleration” of the Anthropocene as human impact on the Earth’s surface dramatically increased after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (4–5). He challenges us to think critically about our existence in this new geological age:

Think about it: a geological time (vast, almost unthinkable), juxtaposed in one word with very specific, immediate things—1784, soot, 1945, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, plutonium. This is not only a historical age but a geological one. Or better: we are no longer able to think history as exclusively human, for the very reason that we are in the Anthropocene. (5)

Morton’s vision of the Anthropocene, and our present reality, is undeniably material. We are learning now that the technologies humans have developed in the name of “progress,” starting from the beginning of the Industrialization, have irreversibly changed the face of the Earth. These changes to the Earth’s surface are due to the very materiality of these technologies, as soot and plutonium are lingering material byproducts of the steam engine and the atomic bomb, and these materialities are now enmeshed in both human and geological history. Bennett’s vision of
vibrant matter and Morton’s perception of the hyperobject further point to how materiality and time are inextricably linked. It is often impossible for us to perceive the full extent of any materiality’s effect on the environment or to conceive of a materiality’s experience of the passage of time due to our own limitations as human beings. Even in the beginning of the twentieth century, modernist authors like Joyce and Woolf anticipated the coming of the Anthropocene underneath the surface of modernization, even if they did not have a name for it. Their concerns for the material and temporality are clearly thematized in their canonical works of high modernism.

Both Joyce and Woolf engage in the ontographical practice identified by Bogost of creating exploded-views of materiality in their works in a way that challenges us to similarly explode our views of time and the material in our own environments. These exploded-views presented in Ulysses, To the Lighthouse, and Between the Acts repeatedly pull us closer to the nonhuman materialities present in the narratives, only to then explode the narrative perspective back out to illustrate how these materialities shape the novel as a whole. The nineteenth and final section of “Wandering Rocks” explodes Joyce’s vision of the entire episode by presenting it to us again as a richly material coda. Joyce’s compressed overview of the episode as viewed from the viceregal cavalcade is incredibly dense and brimming with the materiality of the numerous interpolations that reappear a final time at the end of the episode. Joyce has previously demonstrated how each of those interpolations fits into the narrative, and at the end of “Wandering Rocks,” his exploded-view of an hour in Dublin further illustrates the richness of materiality. Joyce zooms in on moments of time throughout an hour and spreads them out across the pages of the episode to demonstrate how, when the narrative perspective is ultimately zoomed back out in the nineteenth section, these moments collectively embody an hour in
Dublin, much like Bogost’s diagram. His exploded-view also exposes an ecological temporality of things that subverts global standardized time through Joyce’s rendering of a temporality that is irrefutably material.

The “Time Passes” section of To the Lighthouse presents an exploded-view of the passage of time outside of the human perspective in Woolf’s imagination of a world without humans. Woolf moves through the passage of ten years—which include the entirety of the great trauma of modernist literature: World War I—at breakneck speed in the shortest section of the novel that spans the longest amount of time. In “Time Passes,” Woolf moves away from human temporality to adopt the temporality of nonhuman things in her attempt to try and conceive of how time passes when humans are not there to experience it. Morton argues that hyperobjects exist not within an infinite temporality, but a “very large finitude,” which is much more difficult to comprehend than an abstract “forever” (60). Woolf delves into the abstract “very large finitude” of ten years and highlights moments of materiality across that time. She does so in an exploded-view on a much larger scale that elucidates the materiality of an expansive, but finite, amount of time rather than Joyce’s experiment with representing the density of a small amount of time. Her exploded-view of materiality and temporality enables her to turn her attentions to the materialities left behind in the Ramsay house to demonstrate how the nonhuman remains, endures, and even thrives long after we humans have gone.

Between the Acts revises our understanding of human history in its expansive rendering of geological histories. Woolf’s detailing of how various hyperobjects surrounding Pointz Hall have endured throughout history and have been affected by humanity over time undermines an anthropocentric view of history, in addition to a dismissal of the time before humans as simply “prehistory.” Her attentiveness to the nonhuman materialities that take their part in Miss La
Trobe’s pageant—as well as the other materialities she highlights between the acts of the pageant that additionally constitute Pointz Hall—creates an equally as powerful exploded-view of life in the present moment. Woolf compels her readers to consider what goes on “between the acts” of the human drama of the pageant through her focus on the material and her re-envisioning of a human history that is also inextricably geological. These moments of materiality portrayed throughout *Between the Acts*—set on the eve of World War II and *the Great Acceleration* of the Anthropocene—cause us to reconsider our understanding of the past, the present, and thereby the future as we move forward in the material age of the Anthropocene.

Joyce and Woolf anticipated the coming of the Anthropocene by recognizing the extent to which nonhuman materialities shape and affect the Earth. These authors represent modern life as accurately and completely as possible, perhaps fueled by a desire to preserve the world as they know it in the face of such epochal technological and environmental change. Joyce ultimately wants to preserve the Dublin he knew in *Ulysses*, while Woolf too wanted to preserve much of the England she loved by similarly depicting a material history of England in the face of the two world wars that so devastated Europe in the first half of the twentieth century. Their efforts also show us how to adopt an exploded-view of the materiality of our world, not only to recognize the vitality and agency of matter, but also to reconsider our conception of time as linear, uniform, and globally standardized. In response to the standardization of time, Joyce and Woolf both challenge us to conceive of a multiplicity of temporalities in the age of the Anthropocene, including an ecological temporality of things, by advocating for the continued validity of private experiences of time. Their representations of materiality and temporality are no less relevant to us readers in the twenty-first century, as it is increasingly imperative that we understand how materialities affect our current environments and will continue to exist throughout time, even
long after the time of humanity has ended. Exploded-views of materiality and temporality, like those presented by Joyce in *Ulysses* and Woolf in *To the Lighthouse* and *Between the Acts*, are necessary for our survival in the age of the Anthropocene. Without this perspective on the relationship between materiality and temporality, we may never be able to reverse our impact on the Earth’s surface. If we cannot consider the importance and the agency of the material and embrace an ecological temporality of things to conserve the environment, the efforts of Joyce and Woolf to preserve the worlds they loved in their works will be in vain. There may one day be no human left in an environmentally-devastated world that has fallen victim to the anthropocentrism they so earnestly worked to undermine.
Works Cited


